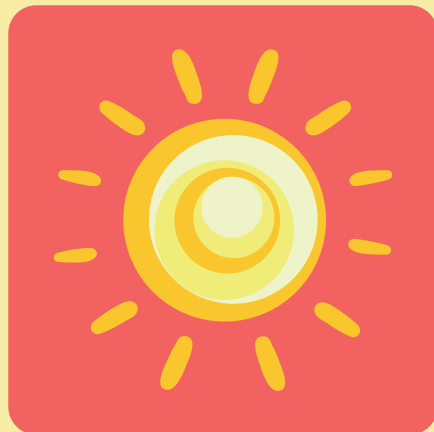


A FOUNDATION COURSE IN

HOLISTIC HUMAN HEALTH

- Its Philosophy and Practice



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In the spirit of universalisation of knowledge for the well being of all, we are making effort for the availability of this book to all unconditionally.

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the well-being of all.

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xii
<i>About the Authors</i>	xv
<i>Note to the Reader</i>	xviii
PART I: An Introduction to Holistic Human Health	1
Chapter 1: What is Health	3
Chapter 2: Our Perspective on Health	5
Chapter 3: Process of Understanding	9
Chapter 4: Holistic Human Health	15
PART II: Understanding the Human Being and Health in the Self (Mental Health)	19
Chapter 5: Human Being: A Co-Existence of Self and Body	21
Chapter 6: The Basic Human Aspiration – Happiness and Prosperity in Continuity	35
Chapter 7: Exploring Happiness and Prosperity	43
Chapter 8: The Body as an Instrument of the Self (The Self is Central to Human Existence)	51
Chapter 9: Understanding Harmony in the Self	55
Chapter 10: Understanding the Human Body and Human Constitution	69
PART III: Universal Health Principles and Specific Recommendations for Health	87
Chapter 11: Universal Health Principles	89
Chapter 12: Specific Recommendations for Health (Based on the Universal Health Principles)	103

PART IV: Practices and Processes for Ensuring Health in the Body–I	129
Chapter 13: Intake of Food	135
Chapter 14: Intake of Water	159
Chapter 15: Intake of Air	173
Chapter 16: Intake of Sunlight	183
PART V: Practices and Processes for Ensuring Health in the Body–II	193
Chapter 17: Daily Routine (Including the Health Tracker)	195
Chapter 18: Seasonal Regimen/Seasonal Routine	243
PART VI: Practices and Processes for Ensuring Health in the Body–III	259
Chapter 19: Labour and Exercise	261
Chapter 20: Body Postures to Regulate External and Internal Organs .	275
Chapter 21: Breath Regulation	279
Chapter 22: Attending to Body Signals (Urges that should not be Suppressed)	283
Chapter 23: Urges that Should be Transformed	295
Chapter 24: Indicators of Health	301
Chapter 25: Early Indicators of Disharmony (Disease) in the Body and Bringing body back to Harmony	303
Chapter 26: Home Remedies	329
Chapter 27: Medicine and Treatment: When to Visit a Doctor	341
Chapter 28: Protecting and Rightly Utilising the Body	353
PART VII: Health of the Environment	373
Chapter 29: Health of The Family	377
Chapter 30: Health of The Society	387
Chapter 31: Health (Harmony) in Nature	399
Chapter 32: Understanding the Harmony in Existence	409

PART VIII: Conclusions of a Holistic View of Health;	
Purpose of a Healthy Body	415
Chapter 33: Conclusions of A Holistic View of Health	417
Chapter 34: Purpose of A Healthy Body	423

APPENDICES

<i>Appendix A - Holistic Human Health Course - Level 1</i>	<i>427</i>
<i>Appendix B - Body Constitution and Diet</i>	<i>435</i>
<i>Glossary</i>	<i>439</i>
<i>Bibliography</i>	<i>451</i>

Preface

Welcome to this journey into health!

Before we embark on this journey together, we would like to share with you, a little about our own journey thus far and how it led to this book.

Why a Book on Holistic Human Health?

As doctors, we had been treating patients as most doctors do, helping them get better with food and lifestyle changes and medication. While in the midst of our busy professional lives, we had the good fortune of being introduced to the UHV (Universal Human Values) program and through it, coming in association with the AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education) in 2018. The physical health module of the UHV program and support from the AICTE provided us with a unique opportunity to blend our training in the field of health and medicine with our learnings of values from the UHV.

With the vision and the extensive and valuable inputs of various stalwarts, both in the field of human values and Ayurveda, we got down to preparing material that would provide a view of health that could be comprehensive, holistic and founded on values. This material was then shared directly with hundreds of teachers and students in the health module of AICTE's eSIP (online student Induction program) Sampler which was conducted in September 2020. Since then, it is being conducted nationwide as a part of the SIP in various colleges under the AICTE banner and has been shared with perhaps many thousands of students so far. The eSIP program of 2020 was further followed by weekly on-line follow-up sessions on Holistic Human Health for students throughout India since December 2020. These are enthusiastically being attended by students and faculty alike and running till date, without a break.

The students and faculty have found the inputs of Holistic Human Health to be extremely useful to them in their practical day-to-day life and they have put forward many testimonials regarding the impact of this material

in helping them achieve better health. We have also learnt much from their experiences and tried to pay heed to many of their suggestions; all this has taken shape in the form of this book which is intended as a reference book for the “Physical health and related activities” module of AICTE’s Student Induction Program.

We feel that besides serving this end, the material put forward in this book would also be extremely useful and of great help to the general reader who wishes to take charge of his/her own health. This book may also be used as the text-book for a Foundation Course in Holistic Human Health for students of various colleges pertaining to the different streams of education, including for medical students (as an add-on course to MBBS, BMS, etc.). A brief outline of an example of such a course has been provided in the Appendix section at the end of the book.

What This Book is About

The book addresses two broad categories – one is the philosophy of Holistic Human Health and the second is its practice.

The Philosophy of Holistic Human Health helps you understand health holistically i.e., with a holistic view. This has been articulated in the form of Understanding the reality as a whole (including the human being and its entire environment), Universal Health Principles based on the reality and Recommendations for Health based on the health principles. This philosophy of Holistic Human Health has been covered largely in the first three parts of the book (i.e., Parts 1, 2 and 3).

The Practice of Holistic Human Health discusses the practices that can be used as tools to prevent disease and also to revert the body back to health, if and when it is diseased. This has been elaborated on largely in the next three parts of the book (i.e., Parts 4, 5 and 6).

Parts 7 and 8 of the book is a mix of both – the philosophy and the practice of Holistic Human Health. With growing populations and the large numbers of people requiring medical intervention at earlier and earlier ages, the

high cost of medical care is a huge economic burden on people worldwide making the accessibility of quality health care for all a near impossible target to achieve. Even if we are to accomplish this target, sustaining it is a possibility that seems very remote at this time. These and other such present-day challenges and problems faced by the healthcare system may well be addressed by increasing focus on holistic human health. Thus, this topic has been touched upon briefly in these last two parts of the book with a vision for the way forward. A lot more work is, of course, required in this area.

Suggestions for further reading have also been made at the end of the book.

In closing, the solution centered approach put forward in this book aims to bring about a shift in paradigm—from disease to health for all. It is important to mention here that nothing that has been said in this book is new or unique. The authors would like to acknowledge and express their gratitude to the rich tradition of saints, sages, rishis and realised souls who saw things for what they are and were able to understand things in totality – in their entirety. They saw the reality for what it is and became one with it, flowing along with it effortlessly. They visualised a global family (Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam) where the well-being of all could be a reality and they played their part, working towards that goal.

It is our sincere wish that this book becomes a stepping stone for guiding you towards the aim of being healthy and staying healthy and we hope that it serves as a small link in the chain to the well-being of all.

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः	Sarve bhavantu sukhinaha	(May all be happy)
सर्वे सन्तु निरामया	Sarve santu niraamayaaha	(May all be free from illness/ disease)
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु	Sarve bhadraani pashyant	(May all see the good and auspicious in everything)
माँ कश्चिद् दुःख भाग-भवेत्	Maa kaschid dukha bhaag- bhavet	(May none be unhappy or distrressed)

Acknowledgements

The understanding of the reality (the truth), to be able to see the existence the way it is, to see the reality of the human being and how the human being fits into this larger whole, to be able to see everything that impacts the health of the human being – all of this has been studied extensively and comprehensively in the past and the knowledge passed down through generations. This rich heritage is available to us in the form of traditional books, writings, discourses, lectures, talks, discussions etc. that have tried to capture the spirit of those who did in fact see the truth- the way things are. So, first and foremost, we would like to acknowledge the wisdom of these many seekers of truth whose help and guidance we have received from time to time, directly or indirectly - our immense gratitude to them.

In this context, we would like to acknowledge our profound gratitude to A. Nagaraj ji who propounded the 'madhyasth darshan'. His vision and the expression of this vision in the form of the various books written by him has opened the door to the possibility of not just a deeper insight into the reality (than merely what appears to be the visible outer form) but also the possibility of a simple, practical and down to earth method of moving towards the development of a society that is all inclusive- where one can see the universality in the midst of all the apparent diversity of human beings - all of this has helped form the very foundation of this book.

This book is not merely the work of its authors. The material put forward in this book has been developed over the past several years with the help of the vision and the extensive and valuable inputs of stalwarts in the field of human values and in that of our traditional forms of medicine, especially Ayurveda. Our immense gratitude goes out particularly to Prof. G.P. Bagaria, an alumnus of IIT Kanpur, highly respected as a teacher in the field of engineering as also in the domain of human values. His vision of the well-being of all and perseverance towards that quest has inspired us to see our role, our participation in it. Having his support and guidance at every step, with ease of access to his knowledge and wisdom, has helped not only to form the framework of this book but also to bring it out in its current form.

Our heartfelt gratitude also goes out to Dr. Kumaraswamy, a veteran in the field of the traditional Indian system of Ayurveda with over three decades of experience. His knowledge and experience in the field of Ayurveda have served as a tremendously vast resource that we could rely on and, with the help of which we have been able to have more clarity about the human body and what impacts its health – whether it be the food we take in, the changing seasons, our daily routine etc.

We acknowledge, with gratitude, the guidance of both these stalwarts at every step whenever we have felt the need for it.

Our gratitude also to the AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education) for seeing the significance of this material in the maintenance of health of its students in technical colleges and taking the bold step of introducing it in their SIP (student induction program for all new students joining the colleges) even before the book took shape. Their constant feedback, encouragement and support has helped improve the material and made good health a reality for thousands of students who could thus have access to this.

Many friends and colleagues, both senior and junior, have also helped in the various processes and stages of putting together this book and we wish to acknowledge the dedication and sincerity with which they have come forward with a readiness to help. In particular, we wish to acknowledge, with gratitude, Dr. Shyam Kumar who readily offered to read through the entire manuscript and give his feedback regarding it (all at extremely short notice); several of his very valuable suggestions were adopted and the book modified accordingly. Sincere gratitude and thanks also to R. Asthana ji for his help with editing the book at every stage – his suggestions and inputs have helped bring out the content of the material in its current format.

Several parts of this book (particularly those related to the Self/ consciousness, the family, society, nature and existence) have been taken directly from the book ‘A foundation course in Human values and professional ethics’ (mentioned in the bibliography) and we would like to acknowledge the gracious permission of the authors of this book, for allowing us to do so.

Our gratitude also to the many, many volunteers of the entire UHV team for their ready support, offering to help with all sorts of odd jobs linked to the book – from proof reading, formatting, adding to the glossaries, adding diagrams etc. Special thanks to Sushma Karwa ji for providing the diagrams of the three body types and to fiver for the diagrams depicting the eye exercises. We would like to acknowledge the immense help provided by Mr. Nitesh Sachan and his team at Earthaat Foundation as also by Mr. Sandeep Murada and his team at PHI for their meticulous efforts in bringing this book out in its current quality of publication.

Last, but not the least, we would also like to acknowledge our gratitude to our families for all their continued and ongoing support and encouragement from behind the scenes (from S. Asthana - to my parents – late Brig. Lajpat Sachdev and late Mrs. Krishna Sachdev, my husband Rajul Asthana and our two sons- Arjun and Pranav who have all pitched in from time to time and participated in this endeavour; from A. Shukla – to my father Mr. M.P. Shukla, mother Mrs. Urmila Shukla, sister Dr. Anupama Shukla and brother Dr. Avinash Shukla and from T. Sundara Raj Perumall- to my father T. Murali Krishna and mother Smt. T. Vara Lakshmi who are the inspiration for social service, to wife Dr. Kavita who always stood as a pillar in ups and downs of life and to my kids Krishna Priya and Shatanand Dhanvantari. Also to my sister Dr. Susheela Murthy, Cdr M.S.N. Murthy, Sri Maitreyi Murthy and Samruddhi Murthy).

About the Authors



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Dr. Sharmila received her graduate medical degree from Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India and her post-graduate degree in the field of Pediatrics, from the Regional Childrens' Hospital in Southern New Jersey, USA. She worked as assistant professor of paediatrics at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA for a few years after which she moved back to India and was the senior consultant paediatrician with Apollo Hospitals, Secunderabad for about 17 years, teaching and practising comprehensive paediatric medicine. She also worked with Lucid Diagnostics for a few years. In a career spanning more than two decades, her keen interest was in ambulatory pediatrics – educating children about self-discipline and helping them take responsibility for their health with minimal use of medication/lab tests. To work towards a wholesome and integrative approach to health, she left medical practice to devote her full time to understanding Universal Human Values (UHV) and pursuing a holistic approach to health, seeking to bring them into living practice and sharing this understanding with others. She is a volunteer resource person for many of the UHV and HHH (Holistic Human health) programs conducted by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) through its National Co-ordination Committee for Induction Programme (NCC-IP) and, in her spare time, likes to read and write. She lives in Hyderabad with her husband and two sons.



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Dr. Akhilesh Shukla completed his Bachelor of Ayurveda Medicine & Surgery in 2008 (RGUHS, Bangalore), and M.D. (Ayurveda Samhita) in 2011 (NTR University of Health Sciences, Vijayawada). He received the Young Investigator Award in Oct. 2011 from the AdiBhat (India) Foundation, New Delhi. In December 2014, he completed his Ph.D. in the Dept. of Basic Principles from the Institute of Post Graduate Teaching and Research in Ayurveda (A WHO Collaboration Centre), Gujarat Ayurveda University, Jamnagar. He worked as an Assistant Professor from 01/02/12 to 15/12/12 and from 15/01/2015 to 20/02/2016 in Amrita School of Ayurveda, Kollam, Kerala, as a lecturer from 23/02/2016 to 06/09/2022 in Govt. Ayurveda College, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh, as a Reader from 07/09/2022 to 13/11/2022 in the Department of Ayurveda Samhita & Siddhanta, Shri NPA Govt. Ayurveda, college, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India. Presently he is working as Assistant Professor in the Department of Ayurveda Samhita & Siddhanta, All India Institute of Ayurveda, North Goa, Goa. He has published more than 40 articles in national and international journals and authored two books.



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Dr. T Sundara Raj Perumall completed his Bachelor of Ayurveda Medicine & Surgery in 2004 (Dr. N.R.S. Govt. Ayurveda College, Vijayawada), and M.D. (Kaya Chikitsa) in 2007 (Dr. B.R.K.R. Govt. Ayurveda College Hyderabad) and MSc Psychology in the year 2011 from SV University, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh. He is a member of National Coordination Committee AICTE-SIP. He started his Ayurveda Practice in Hyderabad, but after getting inspired by the philosophy of UHV he left his successful practice in Hyderabad, went back to his home town Visakhapatnam, built a 40 bedded Ayurveda & Yoga hospital (Arogyadhatri Ayurveda Research Institute) in a remote village called Koduru to serve the poor & needy in surrounding villages.

He is working with many NGOs like Arogyabharathi, Samskrita Bharathi, Seva Bharathi, Viswa Ayurveda Parishad, Bharat Swabhimani Trust, Patanjali Yoga Samithi. He is the founder of VARAMU (Voluntary Association for Rural Awakening & Medical Upliftment) foundation. He has dedicated his life to create awareness in the society about Holistic Human Health by conducting Health exhibitions, Health workshops (online and offline), Medical Camps, Yoga camps. He wrote and directed several short films to promote positive health. He has delivered several lectures in National and International institutes and Universities and published several articles in peer reviewed Journals.

Note to the Reader

As suggested by the name, the purpose of this book is to provide you with a holistic perspective on health that includes everything that impacts your health. In order to have a holistic perspective of health in the human being, it is important to understand things as a whole – in their entirety. To understand things as a whole, we first need to understand the meaning of the word ‘health’ and the reality of the ‘human being’ so that is what this book begins with.

Once you understand the human being and health in the human being, your attention will be drawn to the fact that, as a human being, you live not only as an individual but that you are also a part of a family; you also interact with others in the society and you are certainly not isolated from nature and the existence. All this forms your environment (of which you are a part). So in order to understand health completely, you need to understand all of these and see how they impact your health. Only then can you have a truly holistic perspective on health.

As mentioned in the Preface, the first three parts of the book deal largely with understanding the Philosophy of Holistic Human Health. In this regard, various proposals have been put forth on the following two fundamental aspects –

1. Understanding the reality of the human being and the environment of which it is a part.
2. Understanding the Universal Principles of Health based on the reality and the specific recommendations for health based on these principles.

The remainder of the book deals largely with the Practice of Holistic Human Health i.e., Implementing the understanding gained from the first three parts and, with the help of various practices and processes, moving towards achieving better health.

Both, an understanding of the philosophy as well as the implementation of its practice are important for maintaining good health, therefore, it is

recommended that you read the book in the given sequence. However, if you have already been through a UHV (Universal Human Values) course or workshop, are familiar with the philosophy and wish to skim through the first three parts or even get straight to the practice, you may do so.

How to Read This Book

Before you embark on your journey into health, there are a few suggestions that are likely to maximise the benefit you can derive from this book—

Read with awareness - Look afresh at the proposals put forward in this book. Try and not compare these proposals with what you may have read, seen or heard elsewhere or what you may already believe regarding health or even life in general.

Don't believe or disbelieve - While it is important to not compare the proposals in this book with what you may have heard or read elsewhere, it is equally important to not just go ahead and believe these proposals either, or for that matter to even disbelieve the proposals. So if you should neither believe nor disbelieve the proposals, what should you do?

Verify and experiment for yourself - Read the proposals given in the book and check within yourself – do they seem to make sense? Do they seem right to you? Implement them – experiment with them for some time; use them practically in your day to day life and see if they work for you before you accept (or reject) them.

Don't look for short cuts and quick fixes - If you're looking for a quick readymade solution to all your health problems, this book is not for you. It is possible to put a quick band-aid on a wound the very instant you notice it and this covers up the wound so that it is no longer openly visible to you but it doesn't do anything to heal the wound - the wound is still there beneath it – just that you don't see it. If you want the wound to go away for good, you have to let it heal and that takes a few days (of course the process can happen a little faster if you understand and help support it).

Similarly, health problems don't just spring up suddenly – they've been brewing within for some time – perhaps you just didn't notice them. Well,

now it's time to pay attention and get rid of them from the root. Just as the problems didn't spring up overnight, they may not go away immediately either so don't look for immediate or overnight results. Stay with it and as the body reverts back towards health, you will see the diseases vanishing.

Validate and Understand things for yourself - Once you have read, verified and experimented with the proposals, you will be able to see if they work for you or not. If they work for you, you have now experientially validated them – in other words they have become a part of your understanding. You now know that they work for you – that they are true for you.

Be prepared to take on responsibility - Your health is in your hands... provided you take on the responsibility. The human body is, to a large extent, self-organised – it has built-in processes of repair, detoxification and regeneration which give it the capacity to spring back into action despite several onslaughts on it (up to a point). To keep it functioning at peak capacity, all you have to do is to understand the nature of the body, its inherent harmony and its harmony with the natural environmental rhythms ...and just support this process – or at least not disrupt it. You do have that definite role to play here. We will discuss this at length as we go along.

The Outcome You Should Expect

If you follow all the above suggestions on reading this book, you should expect the following -

A holistic perspective – a widening of the horizon of your vision – one that helps you understand yourself better and is also inclusive of everything that constitutes your environment.

- Better health – and this includes both physical and mental health
- An exploration into the purpose of a healthy body – once you achieve better health, then what? Is that it? Is that why we are here? Or is there more meaning to all this effort on keeping the body healthy?

So together, let us begin our journey of exploration into health with the hope and wish for the well-being of all.

Part I

An Introduction to Holistic Human Health

Chapter 1

What is Health

In the present day, a lot of information is available out there in bits and pieces – health tips, what to do and what not to do to stay healthy, rules and regulations to be followed in order to have a healthy body and so on. Very often one set of tips contradicts another... so how does one wade through this sea of information and make sense of it all. There must be a better method to understand health!

First of all, what is health? What does it mean to be healthy? And ultimately, what is the purpose of a healthy body? This book is about exploring such issues and getting answers to some of these questions.

Health

Oxford English Dictionary defines the word ‘health’ as^{1,2}

The state of being free from illness or injury.

A more apt definition of health was given by The WHO (World Health Organisation) in 1948 when it defined health as³

A state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity

If we go back to our ancient traditional wisdom coming from ‘Ayurveda’ (the ‘science of life’ - ‘ayur’ = life; ‘veda’ = science), health is referred to in terms of a state of total equilibrium – a state of balance (equilibrium/harmony) among the various systems of the body, and an equilibrium of the mind and spirit (a cheerful or happy state of mind)⁴. In other words, a state of complete physical, mental and spiritual well-being - total psycho-somatic equilibrium (‘soma’ = body) (‘psyche’ = mind).

From a practical perspective, one could perhaps say that health has two components:

1. You are able to give the right instructions to the body and the body acts according to what you want it to do

e.g., you decide to wake up early in the morning and you are able to spring out of bed early in the morning

e.g., you are keen to pay attention to something and you are alert and able to pay attention without feeling dull, lethargic, sleepy etc. and

2. The parts of the body are working well together

e.g., one indicator of this may be that you have a good appetite; another indicator may be that you don't fall sick frequently

e.g., you want to sit down cross legged and study and are able to do so or that you are able to walk up 2-3 flights of stairs without getting tired or breathless etc.

We will delve deeper into what all these definitions of health mean but before we do that, in the next chapter, let us first look at what our current perspective about health is.

Test Your Understanding

1. What are the different definitions of health?
2. Which of the definitions do you feel is most acceptable to you?
3. On the basis of the definition most acceptable to you, do you consider yourself to be healthy or unhealthy?

Chapter 2

Our Perspective on Health

What is our perspective about health today? How do we perceive health?

More doctors, better hospitals, better diagnostic tools (better tests and more sophisticated machines) – would that solve the health problems we’re facing today?

Do we perhaps feel that people in the ‘developed’ (richer) countries have an advantage over those in the ‘less developed’ countries because of the availability of better facilities (e.g., better infrastructure, more sophisticated and advanced CT scan or MRI machines etc.) leading to better methods of screening for disease, earlier detection of disease, earlier treatment of disease and therefore better health? Let us explore this for a bit.

While it is true that developed countries can afford to have the best of medical facilities and medical care and while it is also true that many such countries have had a lot of success in reducing the incidence of communicable or infectious diseases (the covid-19 pandemic of course being an obvious exception to this), does this also mean that people in these countries enjoy better health? Not necessarily.

In fact, you may be surprised to note that though communicable or infectious diseases have seen a marked decline in the developed countries (again, putting aside the covid-19 pandemic for a moment), they have merely been replaced by non-communicable causes of ill health and disease (those that do not ‘communicate’ or spread from one person to another). This rise in non-communicable diseases and deaths due to them is, for the most part, a result of totally preventable causes e.g., living an improper lifestyle, accidents, suicides, mental diseases like depression etc.). So better facilities and infrastructure did not translate to better health in this case – rather, one set of diseases was replaced by another.

Needless to say, this is no longer a problem of the developed countries alone; non-communicable diseases are responsible for 70% of mortality

(deaths) worldwide. If we look around we can see that obesity is increasing, leading to diseases like diabetes, hypertension, heart disease etc. Stress (another non-communicable cause of ailments) is also increasing and is leading to irritability, unhappiness, anger, anxiety disorders, depression and at times suicide. So we're faced with many such problems today.... What is the solution? This is what we are going to explore. But first, let us continue to explore our perspective on a few other issues.

For example, what is our perspective about fever? Here too, let us see if perhaps we may have an assumption about fever that is not true (not the reality). Think about it... what is the first thing that comes to your mind when you have a fever? Perhaps, checking the body temperature with a thermometer? The thought of taking a fever reducing medication perhaps? Does the thought of not bringing down the fever also occur? You may be wondering why we are even asking this question...why would you not want to quickly bring a fever down? So, let us take a moment to find out how bad (or good) fever is for the body.

How do you get to know when there is an infection in the body? Either you have pain in some part of the body or you have a fever, isn't it? So pain and fever are just symptoms letting you know that all is not well in the body. So when you quickly take some fever reducing medicine, it certainly brings down the fever but all that has happened is that the symptom of fever has been suppressed. The medication did nothing to get rid of the infection; it just made you forget about the fever for a while but the infection continues to disrupt the health of the body.

And what if you came to know that there is another reason why fever is actually good for the body? The fact of the matter is, whenever there is an infection in the body, nature has designed it such that the body temperature rises and for good reason. It is nature's way of trying to rid the body of the unwanted infection - the white blood cells (WBC) in the body (whose job it is to get rid of the infection) travel to the site of infection a lot faster in presence of an increase in temperature; also the capacity of the WBCs to get rid of the infection and bring the body back to harmony is increased many-fold in presence of increased body temperature!

So the next time you have fever, you may want to check your perspective about it before you go for the fever reducing medicine.

Just as we may have a perspective on health that is not quite true (is different from the reality), we may have many other such beliefs or assumptions that we have not really verified and which we assume to be true. For instance, our perspective about ourselves - the human being. Pause for a moment and reflect on some of these questions:

Is the human being just the body or is it the body + something more? And if it is something more than the body, what is this more?

Here is a proposal - the human being is the Self (Consciousness) + the body

If this is so, then should health address just the body or should it address both - the Self and the body? Are problems like those of stress, anger, anxiety and depression problems of the body or problems of the Self?

Who is responsible for the health of the body - the body or the Self?

In order to get answers to these and many such similar questions, to be able to know- to be able to see the answers for yourself, you would need to understand the human being and everything that impacts the health of the human being. You would need answers to some fundamental questions like:

What is human being?

What is the true meaning of 'Health'? Can we have a holistic view of health?

And ultimately we would also need to explore and ask ourselves—

What is the purpose of a healthy body?

Before we try and get to understanding all this, let us look at the process of understanding that we will be following in this book.

Test Your Understanding

1. What was your perspective regarding health before reading this chapter? Is there any shift in your perspective? What is your perspective regarding health now?
2. What do you normally do when there is a rise in your body temperature (i.e., when you have fever)? Do you straightaway reach for medicine to bring down the temperature quickly? Do you think any differently now?
3. Are there other conditions in which you tend to use medication for symptoms that indicate a problem/ state of disharmony in the body? Do you think the medicine cures the problem or merely suppresses the symptoms? Make a list of five medications that you have used lately and for each one, write down if it cured the problem or suppressed the symptom

Chapter 3

Process of Understanding

What would you prefer – to be given a set of dos and don'ts (rules and regulations) that are to be followed or would you prefer to decide what is right for you based on understanding things for yourself? The latter process is the approach taken in this book.

The process of understanding proposed here is as follows:

Some proposals regarding health will be placed before you.

Do not assume these proposals to be true (or false).

Verify each of the proposals on your own right.

If the proposal is right for you, keep it and implement it in your life.

If the proposal is not right for you, discard it.

Now the question arises, how do you decide if the proposal is right for you or not? How do you verify it for yourself? For this, let us look at the process of understanding in a little more detail.

This is going to be a process of dialogue. To begin with, this dialogue is between us and you. We will ask you some questions (place the proposals before you) and you are expected to answer these questions for yourself, based on your own verification. Now the question was how to verify? This self-verification can be done on the basis of your own 'Natural Acceptance'. And what is this 'Natural Acceptance'?

Self-Exploration Through Natural Acceptance

Natural acceptance is a faculty that we all have. It is innate and invariant and is present in each one of us. It always gives us the right answer. All we have to do is merely refer to it. It's that simple! For example, if you're asked the question – "Do you want to keep your body healthy or unhealthy?" what is the answer you get? Healthy, right? Now where did you get this answer from?

Let us take another example: If you're asked the question – "Do you want to have a feeling of relationship towards other human beings or a feeling of opposition?", now what is the answer you get? Feeling of relationship, right? You want to have a feeling of relationship although you may not always have a feeling of relationship (just as you want to keep your body healthy but may not always keep the body healthy). Now where are these answers coming from? Did you happen to read them in a book? Did someone provide you with these answers? No. You got them from within yourself- from your "natural acceptance", the voice within you.

So in the process of self-verification, we will ask you the questions to begin with and you will come up with the answers from within yourself. This happens in the form of a dialogue between us and you initially but very soon you may find that this dialogue is taking place within yourself- that you are asking yourself these and similar questions and you get the answers from within yourself. If this is happening then the process of self-verification has begun in you!

Process of Self-Verification

**Whatever is stated is a Proposal
Verify it on your own right**

(Do not assume it to be true/false)

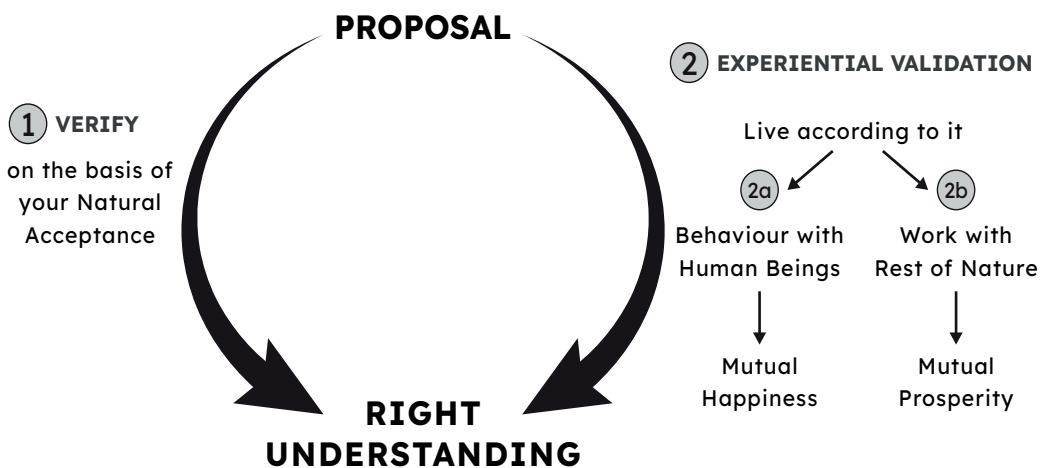


Figure - 3.1

The first part of self-exploration is to verify the proposal on the basis of your natural acceptance. Once you have verified that a proposal is naturally acceptable to you, you are sure that it is something that you would like to live with.

The second part of self-exploration is experiential validation. This means trying to live according to that proposal. In living, we interact with other human beings and we also work with nature. So when living according to the proposal, you can check in your interaction with other human beings, whether the proposal leads to mutual happiness or not (i.e., whether it leads to happiness in yourself and in the other). If it leads to mutual happiness, the proposal is right for you. Similarly, when you work with the rest of nature according to the proposal, verify whether it leads to mutual prosperity or not (i.e., it leads to prosperity for you and for nature). If it leads to mutual prosperity, it is the right proposal; if it does not lead to mutual prosperity, it is not the right proposal.

As an example, let us look at the proposal ‘the feeling of relationship is natural in interaction with other human beings’. Now, as the first part of self-exploration, verify the proposal on the basis of your natural acceptance – is the feeling of relationship naturally acceptable to you or is the feeling of opposition naturally acceptable to you? What is the answer you get from within? You will be able to see that a feeling of relationship is what is naturally acceptable to you and leads to your happiness. This is the first part of the self-verification.

The second part of the exploration involves living according to the proposal. So now, with the feeling of relationship in you, when you interact with another human being and express the feeling of relationship to the other, does it lead to their happiness as well? I can see that the feeling of relationship is naturally acceptable to me and leads to my happiness. Similarly, you can also see that the feeling of relationship is naturally acceptable to you and leads to your happiness as well i.e., it leads to mutual happiness. Hence the second part of the self-verification also holds true. On the basis of these two parts of self-verification together, one can say that the proposal ‘the feeling of relationship is natural in interaction with other human beings’ is a proposal that is right for us.

You can also verify this in your interaction with the rest of nature. For example, let us look at the proposal ‘the feeling of nurturing/enriching is natural in our interaction with the environment’. Verify within yourself whether the feeling of nurturing/enriching is naturally acceptable to you or the feeling of exploiting? You will be able to see that the feeling of nurturing is what is naturally acceptable to you. This is the first part of the self-verification process.

As the second part of the self-exploration, you can live according to the proposal and see for yourself – when you nurture and enrich the environment, does it lead to mutual prosperity? You will find that when you enrich the environment, it leads to prosperity of the environment in terms of enrichment and it also facilitates better food production leading to your prosperity as well. Thus, it can be concluded that it leads to mutual prosperity and hence this proposal - ‘the feeling of nurturing/enriching is natural in our interaction with the environment’ is a proposal that is right for us.

Both these parts of self-exploration are essential. When one is able to verify a proposal through both steps—

1. Verification through the natural acceptance and
2. Verification through experiential validation

It leads to ‘right understanding’.

Ultimately, it is this dialogue that has to start within yourself – the dialogue between what you really want to be (your natural acceptance) and what you presently are (your ability). As you carry on this dialogue within yourself, you will find that you move closer and closer to what you really want to be (your natural acceptance). Eventually this leads to the completeness of right understanding.

e.g., the dialogue may be between ‘Do I want to be totally healthy?’ and ‘Am I totally healthy?’ We will explore this dialogue in more detail as we go along in the book.

Test Your Understanding

1. What do you understand by the term self-exploration?
2. What is natural acceptance?
3. Is natural acceptance the same in all or is it different for different people?
4. Does natural acceptance vary with age, time, place or person? Did you have the same natural acceptance as a child as the natural acceptance you have now?

Chapter 4

Holistic Human Health

Having looked at the process of understanding briefly (self-exploration on the basis of natural acceptance), let us now take a look at what holistic human health means.

To understand holistic human health, we need to see the reality of the human being. We had shared the proposal that the human being is not just the body but Self + the Body.

So, health in the human being must include both –

The health of the Self and

The health of the Body

Now here is another proposal –

The human being is embedded in his surroundings, in this existence – he is not isolated; the health of a human being is impacted by everything in the environment of the human being (i.e., his relationships, the family and society he lives in and nature and existence of which he is a part) Therefore, the health of the environment must also be taken into consideration.

Thus, Holistic Human Health is a holistic perspective on health that includes an understanding of the human being and everything that impacts the health of the human being. This means that to understand health in totality, you need to understand the following four major things:

- 1. The Human being** – To be able to see/understand that you are not just the body but a co-existence of the Self and the body; to be able to see that the thoughts, feelings and emotions you have in yourself have a direct impact on the health of your body.
- 2. Relationships/Family** – To be able to understand your relationships with other human beings and their impact on your health – when you have fulfilling relationships, they impact your health in a positive manner. However, whenever you feel unfulfilled in your relationships, you are unhappy and this impacts the health of the body also.

- 3. The society you live in** – When there is fearlessness (trust) in society, you feel comfortable -it has a positive impact on your health. However, whenever there is fear in society you live with a constant sense of anxiety and this impacts the health of the body negatively.
- 4. Nature and existence** – When you understand the underlying harmony in nature and existence and align yourself to it, it results in good health for you. When you don't understand this and violate/ exploit nature, disrupt the innate harmony in nature, it impacts the health of the body negatively (it is easy to see that poor air, water and soil quality harm the body leading to its ill health).

Thus you need to understand the harmony at all these four levels in order to be in harmony and good health yourself.

Last but not the least, you also need to understand the purpose of a healthy body. You need to be able to see that a healthy body is a means to an end and not the end in itself. When you do that, you make the effort to live not just longer but also to live a healthier and more fulfilling and joyful life.

In other words, Holistic Human Health encompasses all of the following:

Holistic Human Health

1. Mental health or health of the self
 - Understanding the human being
 - Understanding the self
 - harmony in the selfhealthy self ①
2. Physical health or health of the body
 - Understanding the body
 - harmony in the bodyhealthy body ②
3. Conditions for mental and physical health
i.e. health of the environment
 - Understanding the environment
 - harmony in the family
 - harmony in the society
 - harmony in the nature/existencehealthy environment ③

Further, with an understanding of this holistic perspective, we will chart out a program for implementing this – so that our understanding can translate to better health for us. So we will look into the following aspects:

- I. Basic Health principles (understanding the reality – the way things are), having a holistic perspective on health (the answer to the question – “why to do”)**
- II. Recommendations for health - based on the reality/principles (the answer to – “what to do”) and**
- III. Implementation of the recommendations (practices and processes to stay healthy – the answer to “how to do”)**

Let us now start our journey with ‘Mental’ health or Health of the Self. For this we need to first understand the human being so we will begin with this in the next section.

Test Your Understanding

1. What is holistic human health?
2. What all would you need to understand in order to understand health in totality?
3. Explain in your own words, your understanding of the terms basic health principles, recommendation for health and implementation of the recommendations.

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Part II

Understanding the Human Being and Health in the Self (Mental Health)

Chapter 5

Human Being: A Co-Existence of Self and Body

Now that we have seen what a holistic perspective on health would include, let us try to understand each of the components of this holistic perspective on health one by one. To understand health in the Self, we need to first understand the human being, its aspirations and the fulfilment of these aspirations.

When we say 'human being', what do you visualise? You probably visualise the familiar form and features of a human being. Do you also think of a human being as something more than that? For instance, do you also think about who is the one visualising? Who is the one that thinks, sees, and understands things? Who is the one that becomes happy or sad? Is the human being just the form that one sees (the body) or something more than that?

Here is a proposal for you to explore -

Human Being is a co-existence of the Self and the body.

We can see that the body may be tall or short, thin or fat, healthy or sick. But when you say 'I' are you referring to the body or something more than that? This something more is what is being referred to as the 'Self'. So, I (the Self) am the one that enjoys listening to music, I am the one that feels elated or depressed and so on. And when I eat food, I can see that while the food is consumed by the body, it is I (the Self) that decides what food to eat; it is I/Self that likes or dislikes the taste of the food. We will explore all this in more depth as we go along.

Now let us try to look at the Self and the body separately in more detail so that we can understand these two realities better.

Needs of Self And Needs of Body

When we look closely we can see that we want to be happy; we never want to be unhappy. It is I/the Self that wants to be happy i.e., the need of the Self is for happiness. The needs of the Self have to do with feelings – so I can see that the feelings of trust, respect etc. are my needs – the needs of the Self. On the other hand, the needs of the body have to do with physical facility (e.g., food). And we can see that both these needs are important and required for human beings.

Are these needs of the same type or different type? Can one type of need be replaced by the other?

We can try to understand this with the help of an example. Suppose you are given food to eat but the person giving you the food talks to you disrespectfully when giving you the food. Will you feel like eating the food? Or, a person treats you with a lot of respect but doesn't offer you food, will it work for you? For instance, you go to a friend's house and it is lunch time; he does offer you food but while serving you food on your plate he says – 'You always manage to show up at lunch time for a free meal – go ahead, eat.' Even though you may have been hungry for food a moment ago, hearing these words may take your appetite away! Similarly, you go to a friend's house - he says a lot of kind words and shows a lot of respect for you but you're there for several hours, it's lunch time now and he doesn't offer any food. Will respect be sufficient to make up for the absence of food? More than likely, not!

That's because these two needs are of different types and one type of need cannot be replaced by the other.

Needs With Respect to Time (Temporary or Continuous?)

If we delve deeper and look at these two types of needs in the context of time, we find that the needs of the body e.g., for food are temporary – required from time to time, not continuously. For instance, you feel hungry and you take food. Does the body continue to need food once the stomach is full? No. Once the stomach is full, you don't feel the need for food; in fact

if someone now offers you food, you may not even look at it and if forced to eat, you may even find it intolerable.

How about the needs of the Self? Take the example of the need of the Self for respect. Do you think you need respect all the time or are you okay with respect sometimes and disrespect sometimes? If a friend greets you with a 'Namaste' or a 'good morning' everyday but fails to do so one day, do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable? Do you not pay any heed or do you notice this and start getting disturbed about why the person did not wish you today? You get disturbed because whenever there is a break in the feeling of respect for you, you feel uncomfortable, isn't it? This is because you want to be respected all the time. Even a small gap in this is unacceptable to you.

However, when you look at the need for food – this is a temporary need; it is not continuous in time. You feel hungry for breakfast, you eat till your stomach is full and then you stop eating. You now no longer feel the need for more food. After a gap of 3-4 hours, you feel hungry again and you eat a hearty lunch and once your stomach is full you stop and so on.

What if someone tried to make you eat continuously? Would you feel comfortable or uncomfortable? This would make you very uncomfortable – in fact you may eat a little more out of politeness even though you don't feel the need for food anymore but if the person continues to force you to eat, it will become intolerable after a point and you will have to refuse saying that you just can't eat anymore!

So in the case of respect, we want it all the time but in the case of food, we want it only from time to time, not all the time.

In this manner we can examine all the needs of the Self and the body. We will find that the needs of the Self (e.g., for relationship, happiness, trust, respect etc.) are continuous – we want them all the time and a break in any one of them even for one moment is not acceptable to us, makes us uncomfortable. On the contrary, the needs of the body (e.g., for food, clothes, shelter etc.) are temporary – we need them only for a limited time and if we're told to have them in continuity, we become uncomfortable and in fact it becomes a problem for us.

Needs of Self And Body in Terms of Quality And Quantity

This is one more difference between the needs of the Self and those of the Body.

The needs of the Body for food (or clothes, or shelter etc.) are quantitative in nature – we can identify the quantity that is needed e.g., we can find out how much food we need to nourish the body – we can see that food is needed in a limited quantity and we can measure this amount. So one person may need to eat 2 rotis, another may need 4, someone may even need to eat 8 or 10 rotis in one meal but there is no one who can eat unlimited number of rotis! Similarly we can see for clothes (a measurable amount of cloth is needed to make a dress), for shelter (a measurable amount of material is required to build a house) and so on. We can observe this to be true for any physical facility required by the body.

When it comes to the needs of the Self, however, we find that these needs cannot be measured – they are qualitative, not quantitative. So all the feelings needed by the Self (e.g., the feelings of trust, respect etc.) are qualitative in nature – they are either there or not there. We cannot measure them in quantities.

With all these differences we can see that that the needs of the body (for physical facility) and the need of the Self (for happiness) are two very different types of needs that cannot be substituted for one another.

Fulfilment of The Needs of The Self And The Body

Now let us look at how we can fulfil these two different types of needs.

We may satisfy our hunger with rice, chapati, vegetable etc. – all of these can be termed physio-chemical things. In fact, all our bodily needs can be satisfied with physio-chemical things.

How about the needs of the Self? We can see that the need of the Self for respect, is fulfilled by the feeling of respect. We may be able to see this for ourselves: when we interact with our family members, friends and relatives, we expect them to listen to us, pay attention to us and appreciate us –we recognise these as their expressions of the right feeling towards us and from these we conclude that they respect us.

You can see for yourself if your need for respect gets fulfilled when your friends give you lot of food but no respect or if you are hungry and your friends and relatives say nice things, give you respect but don't offer food. In both instances you would be uncomfortable because in the first instance, the need of the body for food is fulfilled but the need of the Self for respect is not. Similarly, in the second instance also you would be uncomfortable because though you were given a lot of respect, you were hungry and were not given any food.

Thus the needs of the Self and the needs of the body are different and are fulfilled differently. We cannot fulfil only one type of need and expect the need of the other to be fulfilled automatically. That does not happen. On exploring, we will be able to see that all the needs related to the body have to do with physical facility and are fulfilled by one or the other physio-chemical thing while the needs related to the Self are to do with feelings and are fulfilled by feelings. We may have all the physical facility but does it satisfy the need of the Self for happiness, for feelings like trust, respect etc.? You can check this for yourself.

Whenever there is any unhappiness in your family, what is the major reason for it? You will find that the major reason for the unhappiness in the family is the lack of fulfilment in relationships. So while the need of the body is for physical facility, the need of the Self is for happiness – for feelings in relationship. So relationship is necessary for fulfilment in the Self. But you don't need to just accept this; check it out for yourself.

If you ask your natural acceptance, you will find that you have a natural acceptance for having the right feeling for others in the family and do want fulfilling relationships with them. You don't want to fight with your family members and may often even decide not to fight, but what happens ... a fight does end up taking place when you come face to face again! Why is that? Because you have not understood your relationships properly and hence are not in a position to fulfil them. In order to have the right feeling in all your interactions and to have fulfilling relationships, you need to understand your relationships. So right understanding in the Self is also required for fulfilment of the human being.

Thus, as human beings, we need three things - physical facility (for the need of the body to be fulfilled), fulfilment in relationship (for fulfilment of the need of the Self for the right feeling) and the right understanding within the Self (also a need of the Self).

Needs of Self – Definite; Needs of Body - Variable

The needs related to the body vary according to the age of the body, the health of the body, the shape and size of the body etc. For instance, a tall boy will need more cloth for making a pant while a short boy will need less cloth for the same; a young adult will need to eat more food than an old man and so on.

But when it comes to the Self, the needs of the Self are definite. They do not change with age or with a change in the condition of the body. So just as a child wants to be happy, so does an adult and so does an elderly person. In other words, right understanding and right feelings are the needs of each and every Self.

The following chart depicts what we have discussed so far regarding the needs of the Self and the body.

Human Needs and Their Fulfilment

Human Being		
Self ← <small>Co-Existence</small> → Body		
Need	Happiness (e.g. Respect)	Physical Facility (e.g. Food)
In Time	Continuous	Temporary
In Quantity	Qualitative (is Feeling)	Quantitative (Required in Limited Quantity)
Fulfilled By	Right Understanding & Right Feeling	Physio-Chemical Things

The needs of the Body can not be fulfilled by Right Understanding, Right Feelings alone
 The needs of the Self can not be fulfilled by Physio-Chemical Things

Both type of needs ahve to be understood separately
 Both type of needs have to be fulfilled separately

In living, What is the priority?

How much time & effort is spent for right understanding & right feelings?

How much time & effort is spent for physical facility?

Figure - 5.1

Now let us look at the activities of the Self and the body.

Activities of the Self and the Body

The Self has the activities of desire, thought and expectation going on within it continuously. You can observe these activities within yourself; if you pay a little attention, you may be able to see that you are thinking something or the other all the time, you are desiring something or the other all the time. If you try to stop your thoughts, you are not able to do so. Even when you sleep, your thoughts keep continuing in the form of dreams. If you get bored of thinking of one thing you start thinking of another thing but you're thinking all the time. Similarly, the activity of desire is also going on continuously – one desire that you can see we all have in continuity is our desire to live. The activities of desire, thought and expectation together are termed the 'imagination' and some or the other imagination is going on within you all the time. See if you are able to observe this within yourself.

Activities in the body, on the other hand, are not continuous. They occur from time to time. For example, the activity of walking – you walk for some time, then the body gets tired, you rest for a while and then you are ready to walk again. Similarly, you can observe this for the activity of eating, as was mentioned earlier – you feel hungry for breakfast, you eat, your stomach becomes full and then you don't need food again for 3-4 hours – then you feel hungry again and you eat lunch and so on. Even if you try, you cannot keep walking or keep eating without a break!

Try to observe the activities in the body and you will find that this is true for all activities within the body- you may think your breathing is continuous but if you observe closely, inspiration (breathing in) is followed by a brief pause which is followed by expiration (breathing out) so breathing is not a continuous activity. Similarly, the heart beat may also appear to be continuous but if you observe closely you will find that it is not continuous- the heart muscle contracts, pumping out blood; this is followed by a brief pause and then the heart muscle relaxes, allowing the blood to fill up in the heart. You can take examples of other activities in the body as well.

In this manner you can observe that all the activities of the Self are continuous while all the activities of the body are temporary. No matter how hard you try, you are not able to stop the activities of the Self while when

it comes to the body, you are not able to continue any activity of the body without a pause. You can explore and verify this for yourself.

So we have seen how the Self and the Body can be differentiated from one another on the basis of their needs and their activities. Now let us look at the third major difference between the Self and the Body – at the level of response.

The Response of the Self and the Body

The response of the body is based on ‘recognising’ and ‘fulfilling’ i.e., the Body ‘recognises’ a certain entity and ‘fulfils’ its relationship with it. The response of the Self on the other hand is based on knowing, assuming, recognising and fulfilling. Let us try to understand what is meant by these terms.

As an example: if you eat a banana, a vegetable, some grain or any other food, the body responds in a certain way- it ‘recognises’ its relationship with that food and ‘fulfils’ that relationship – we can see that the food gets digested and the body is nourished. On the other hand, if we eat ‘junk food’ or if we eat something that is poisonous, it harms the body. This response is definite – the body responds in the same way each time. Something that is nutritious, nurtures the body; something that is poisonous always harms the body. The body does not have a choice in this matter – it is always so.

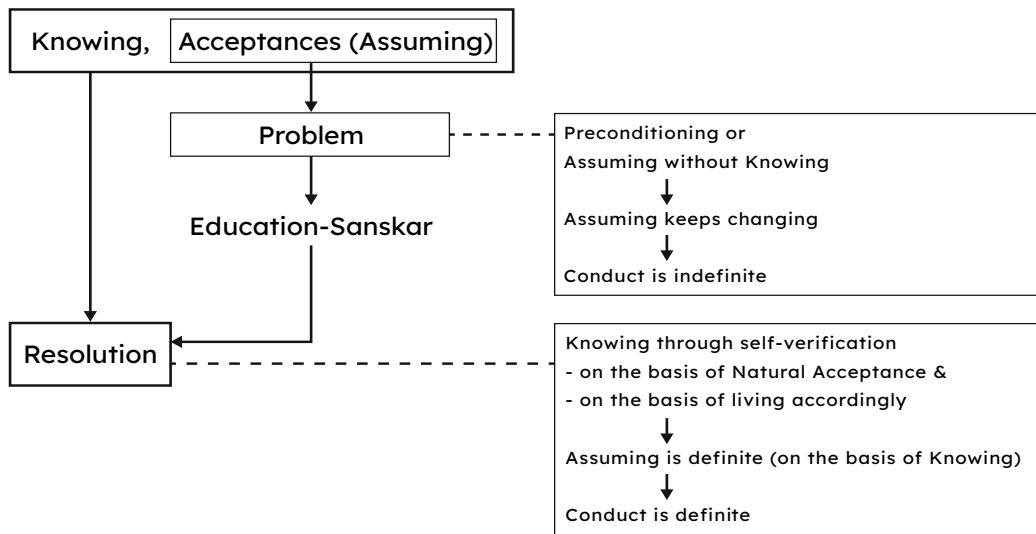
In the case of the Self, the recognition and fulfilment is based on assuming and knowing. I (the Self) recognise and fulfil my relationship on the basis of my assumption. So if I assume that junk food is good for me, I may keep eating junk food at each meal. This response of the Self on the basis of its assumption is not definite – each time my assumption changes, my response changes i.e., my behaviour changes. When a newspaper quoting a scientific study says that drinking coffee is good for health, I start drinking coffee every day but when another study comes out saying that coffee is harmful for the body, I stop drinking coffee because now my assumption has changed so my response changes on the basis of the changed assumption.

So if I assume that a poisonous plant (like ‘dhatūra’ for example) is nutritious,

I will willingly consume it – at the level of the body, however, the poisonous plant will cause the body harm since the recognition and fulfilment of the body is definite and does not change. The body does not have a choice in this. The choice lies with the Self and the Self makes this choice based on assuming. If the assuming is based on knowing (understanding) the response is definite; if the assuming is not based on knowing (is with lack of understanding) the response is indefinite. When the assumption is based on knowing, the response or behaviour becomes definite because now I have seen the reality and no matter what anyone else may tell me, I know the truth and I make choices based on this knowing rather than any assumption from outside.

In order to be in a state of resolution and to be able to solve all problems, the most important task for a human being is to get to this knowing/ understanding by seeing the reality directly for oneself.

So we have seen how the needs, activities and responses of the Self and the Body are different from one another. These are two different realities – the Self is a unit of consciousness while the Body is a material unit and the two co-exist together in the form of a human being. This is very important to know. All this is summarised in the chart below.



Response Based on Knowing
and Response Based on Assuming Without Knowing

Figure - 5.2

Human Being: Co-existence of Self and Body

Human Being		Self ← Co-Existence → Body
Need	Happiness (e.g. Respect)	Physical Facility (e.g. Food)
In Time	Continuous	Temporary
In Quantity	Qualitative (is Feeling)	Quantitative (Required in Limited Quantity)
Fulfilled By	Right Understanding & Right Feeling	Physio-Chemical Things
Activity	Imagination (Desire, Thought, Expectations)...	Eating, Walking...
In Time	Continuous	Temporary
Response	Knowing, Assuming, Recognising, Fulfilling	Recognising, Fulfilling
↓		↓
Consciousness		Material

Figure - 5.3

It is also important to realise, as was mentioned before, that happiness is a need of the consciousness (Self) and this need is fulfilled by right understanding and right feeling within the consciousness/Self. The body, being a material unit, has needs that are material and these needs are fulfilled by physio-chemical things. For a human being to be fulfilled, both these needs are important and both have to be fulfilled separately; one cannot be substituted for the other. You can explore this and verify it for yourself.

Human Being		Self ← Co-Existence → Body
Need	Happiness (e.g. Respect)	Physical Facility (e.g. Food)
In Time	Continuous	Temporary
In Quantity	Qualitative (is Feeling)	Quantitative (Required in Limited Quantity)
Fulfilled By	Right Understanding & Right Feeling	Physio-Chemical Things
↓		↓
Consciousness		

Need of the self, - continuous happiness, - need of consciousness

Fulfilled by - Right Understanding and Right Feeling in the self-activities of consciousness

(The need of consciousness is fulfilled by activities of consciousness)

Figure 5.4

Human Being		
	Self ← Co-Existence →	Body
Need	Happiness (e.g. Respect)	Physical Facility (e.g. Food)
In Time	Continuous	Temporary
In Quantity	Qualitative (is Feeling)	Quantitative (Required in Limited Quantity)
Fulfilled By	Right Understanding & Right Feeling	Physio-Chemical Things

↓
Material

Need of the body, - Physical facility* - material in nature
 Fulfilled by - Physio-chemical things - also material in nature

(The need of material is fulfilled by material)

*physical facility is required for nurturing, protection and right utilization of the body, leading to health in the body

Figure - 5.5

When we don't understand this difference between the Self and the Body and we assume that we are just the body, we keep trying to fulfil the continuous need of the Self for happiness through the material body and it does not work. For example, you may like the taste of a 'rasgulla' or 'samosa' and go on eating it (even if it is unhealthy for the body) because you feel happy when you eat it. But how long does this happiness last? It lasts only as long as the food is on your tongue, isn't it? The moment the food goes down the throat it no longer gives you any taste. But the need of the Self for happiness is continuous. In order to fulfil this continuous need, you would have to keep eating continuously which is not possible! And you would still be unfulfilled and unhappy!

This is true for happiness sought through any of the five sense organs of the body. You can try this out and see for yourself.

A Gross Misunderstanding – Assuming the Human Being to be Just the Body

A gross misunderstanding is to assume the human being to be only the Body. When one does that, one tries to fulfil all the needs through physical facility.

Gross Misunderstanding - Assuming Human Being to be just the Body

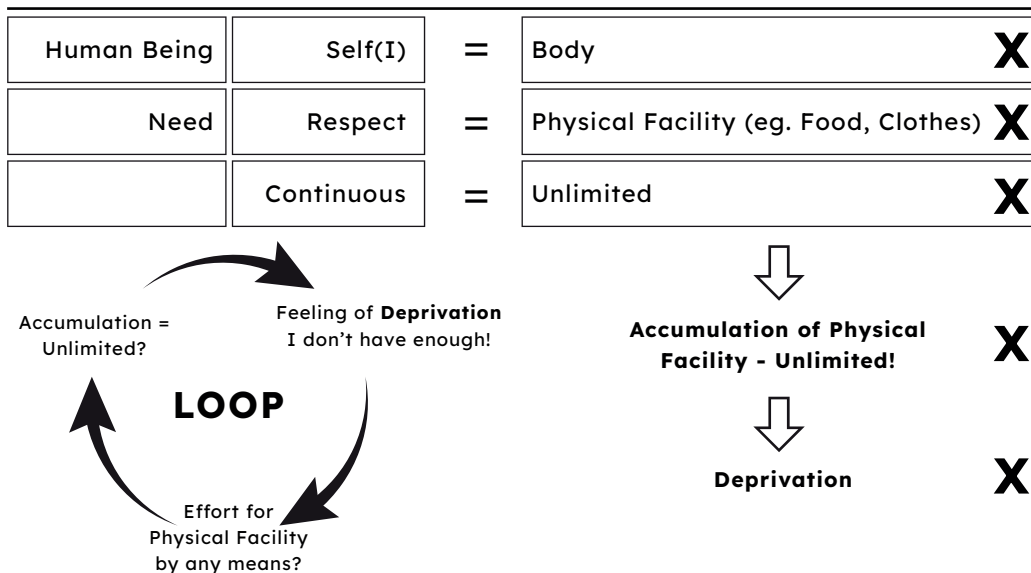


Figure - 5.6

Needless to say that due to over-use of physical facility, there are widespread repercussions at every level of human existence. On the one hand, there is exploitation of natural resources for more and more physical facility. On the other hand, human beings are also being exploited in the process and are being made to compete for physical facility which after all is limited.

The Way Ahead

The only way out of this misunderstanding is to understand the human being for what it is – a co-existence of the Self (a conscious entity) and the Body (a material entity) and to understand that the needs, activities, and responses of these two entities are quite different from one another.

Test Your Understanding

1. What are the three specific distinguishing attributes of the Self and the body? Give examples to explain.
2. Is food a need of the Self or the body?

3. Each time you eat or drink something in the entire day, check -

Are you eating primarily to fulfill the need of the body or are you eating primarily for the Self (e.g., healthy food/tasty food which may not be healthy)?

Chapter 6

The Basic Human Aspiration – Happiness and Prosperity in Continuity

We saw that the human being is a co-existence of the Self and the body and we mentioned briefly that a basic need of the Self is for happiness. At the level of the Self, we all want to be happy and though we are not always happy (sometimes we are happy and sometimes we are unhappy), we all do want happiness all the time, isn't it? You can ask yourself if there is even one moment in the day when you want to be unhappy and you will be able to see that though you may be unhappy at times, you never want to be unhappy.

In fact, everything you think about, everything you want to do in life, you want to do because you think it will give you happiness. Think about it – you want to get a job...why do you want to get a job? Perhaps so that you can earn money...and why do you want money?...To buy things. And why do you want to buy things? In this manner, if you keep asking this question why, ultimately you realise that everything you think and do, you do for happiness. Even if you want to do some good for others, you do because it gives you happiness; you have a natural acceptance for happiness. All human beings do.

Go ahead and ask yourself:

- Do I want to be happy?
- Do I want to be prosperous?
- Do I want the continuity of happiness and prosperity?

What are the answers you get? An affirmative yes, isn't it?

So we have a natural acceptance for happiness and prosperity all the time (in continuity).

These are our basic aspirations.

Are you able to fulfil these aspirations all the time? Now the answer is not such a confident ‘yes’, is it? There may be quite a gap between your basic aspiration and your state of being. Now ask yourself if you are making effort to fulfil your basic aspiration of happiness and prosperity or are you making effort largely for accumulating physical facility?

If you are making effort largely for physical facility, is it perhaps because you have assumed that happiness and prosperity “will automatically come” when you have enough physical facility?

If this is not so, then check what effort you are making other than that for accumulation of physical facility?

Here is another question for you to answer

Is the unhappiness in your family today,

- More due to lack of physical facility or
- More due to lack of fulfilment in relationship?

On seriously exploring this question, you will find that the major reason for the unhappiness in your family is the lack of fulfilment in relationship and not just the lack of physical facility. In fact, you may have sufficient physical facility already.

Now check for yourself

- How much time and effort are you investing for physical facility, and
- How much time and effort are you investing for fulfilment in relationship?

You will find that the problem is more due to lack of fulfilment in relationship and you are investing most of your time and effort for physical facility!

While physical facility is necessary for human beings, you will be able to see clearly from this discussion that relationship is also necessary.

In fact, you will find that this is one basic difference between animals and human beings. If you take the example of a cow, when it lacks physical

facility, it becomes uncomfortable but when it gets a stomach full of grass, it is satisfied and comfortably sits and chews the cud. Not so for the human being!

If a human being lacks physical facility, (s)he becomes uncomfortable and unhappy. And once (s)he gets the physical facility, (s)he forgets about it and starts thinking about a hundred other things.

In other words, physical facility is necessary for both animals and human beings but

- For animals, physical facility is largely adequate.
- For human beings, physical facility alone is not sufficient.

In order to be fulfilled, a human being requires relationship also. Ask yourself—

1. Do you want to live in relationship (harmony) with others or
2. Do you want to live in opposition with others or
3. Do you believe that in living, there is ‘struggle for survival’ and ‘survival of the fittest’ and check if you feel happy living this way?

A little introspection and you will be able to see that what is naturally acceptable to you is the first option - living in harmony with others-with a feeling of relationship. You certainly do not want to live in opposition with others.

While you do have a natural acceptance to live with a feeling of relationship, are you able to live with a feeling of relationship?

Every time there is a fight at home, we want to resolve it. We promise ourselves we won't fight again but what happens? A fight again ends up taking place by night!

Does this happen with you, with your brother, sister, father, mother, spouse, children, with your friends, co-workers, etc.?

So why is it that though we want to live in relationship we are not able to live in relationship? Do we really understand relationship? If we don't

understand relationship, can we live in relationship?

So we can see that for ensuring fulfilment in relationship, it is necessary to have the right understanding about relationship.

Thus, for a human being to be fulfilled, all three are necessary - physical facility, relationship and right understanding. All three are required and one cannot be substituted for the other.

Now if all three are required, what should be the priority?

The proposal is -

Right Understanding – First priority

Relationship – Second priority

Physical Facility – Third priority

When we live with all three in the right priority as mentioned above, we are living with ‘human consciousness’

On the other hand, if we are living for physical facility alone, and right understanding is missing, one outcome is that we do not understand our relationships and do not have the right feeling in relationship. Therefore we feel unhappy and hence makes others unhappy too.

The other outcome is that if right understanding is missing, we are not able to identify our need for physical facility correctly. Now, if we are not able to identify our need for physical facility correctly, then no matter how much physical facility we accumulate, we feel that we don’t have enough and keep wanting more. This feeling of not having enough is the feeling of deprivation. As a result, we feel deprived and end up exploiting and depriving others.

If we live like that, we are living with ‘animal consciousness’.

We therefore generally see two kinds of people today:

1. Those lacking physical facility, unhappy and deprived
2. Those having physical facility, yet unhappy and deprived

Check where you are – at 1 or at 2?

And where did we want to be? -

3. Having physical facility, happy and prosperous.

You may be able to see that what we call development today largely takes us from '1' to '2'.

But when we live with human consciousness, i.e., when we live with all three - right understanding, relationship and physical facility, in that priority, the outcome is

- With the right understanding, we understand our relationships and have the right feeling in relationship; we feel happy and when we share this feeling with others, we make others happy too thus leading to mutual happiness.
- With right understanding, we are also able to identify our need for physical facility correctly and learn the skills to produce more than required physical facility using natural and cyclic processes that are mutually enriching. We thus have prosperity and at the same time, also enrich nature ensuring prosperity in nature and leading to mutual prosperity.

This has been depicted in the diagram below—

Human Being living with Right Understanding, Relationship and Physical Facility in priority order

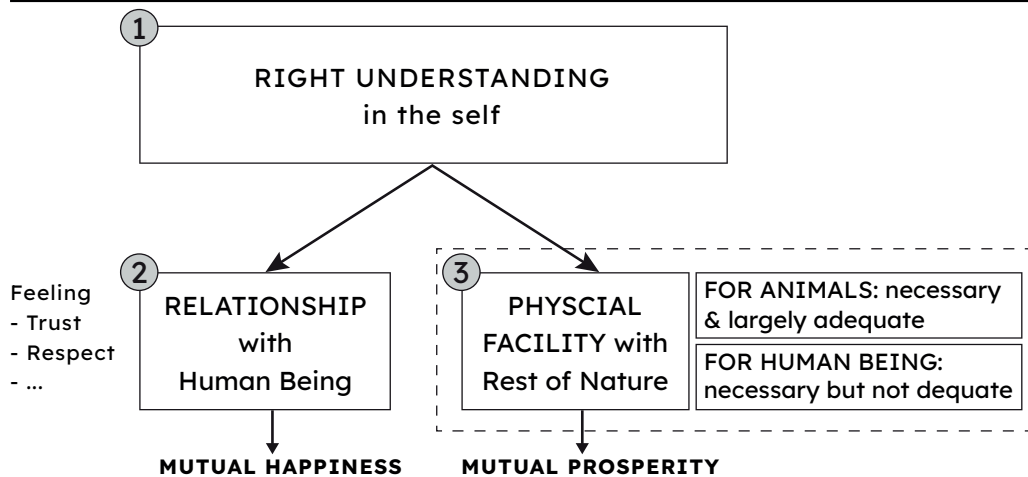


Figure - 6.1

Holistic development is the transformation of consciousness – from animal consciousness to human consciousness. Of course, this necessitates working on all three – right understanding, fulfilment in relationship as well as physical facility - in that order of priority.

Transformation, Progress, Holistic Development

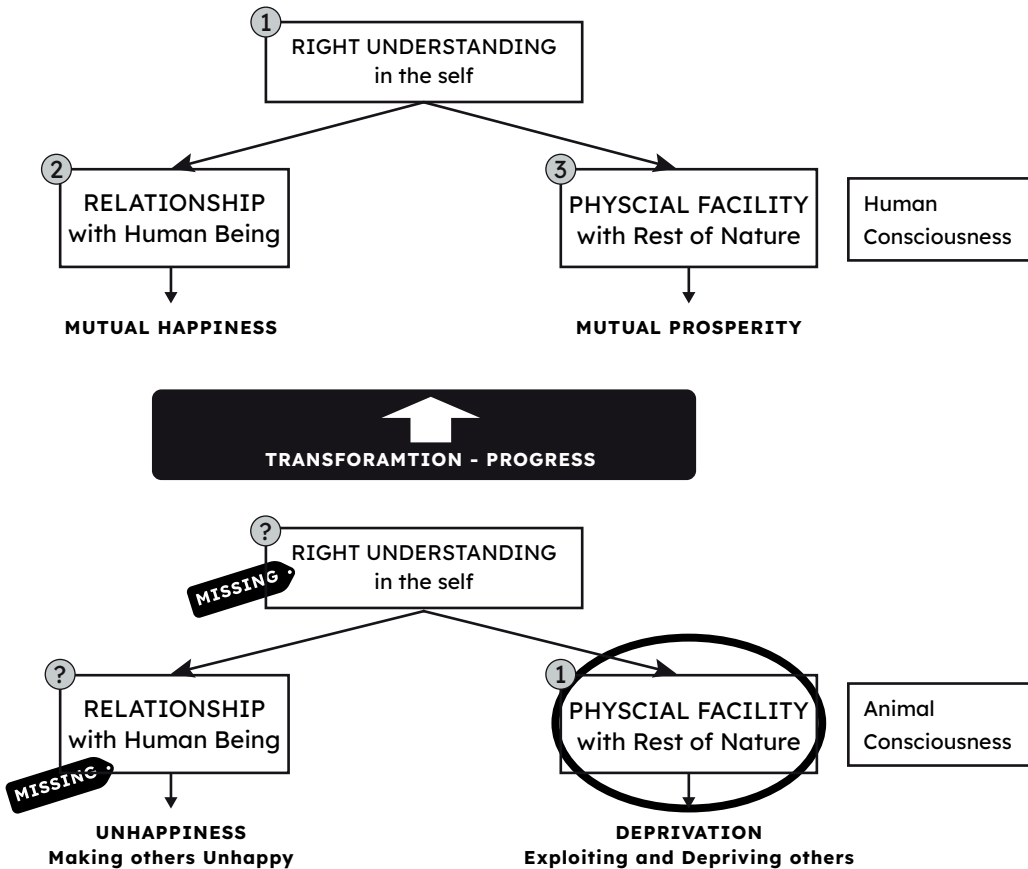


Figure - 6.2

This can be enabled through education and sanskar.

Education is the developing of the right understanding (a holistic perspective).

Sanskar is the commitment, preparation and practice of living with right understanding. The preparation includes learning appropriate skills and technology.

Test Your Understanding

1. What is the difference between a 'desire' and your 'basic aspiration'?
2. Make a list of your top 5-10 desires. For each desire, ask yourself why you have that desire i.e., what you think you will get from it. Keep asking yourself this question 'why' till there is no further question to ask. Next to each desire, write down the basic aspiration at the root of it. Can you see that you have the same basic aspiration at the root of every desire?
3. For each desire in your list of desires, check – is the desire related to the self or to the body? What do you conclude from this?
4. In the above list, note down what you think would be needed to fulfil each desire

(i) Right Understanding (RU)

(ii) Relationship (right feeling - RF) or

(iii) Physical facility (PF)?

e.g., desire for good health.

If the fulfilment of a desire requires more than one of these, note down the priority e.g., RU, RF, PF etc. What do you conclude from this exercise? Is RU required for the fulfilment of none, some or all of your aspirations?

5. List your activities in the course of a typical day. Which of these activities are you doing for developing

right understanding, which for fulfilment in relationship and which for physical facility?

Find out what percentage of your time is being spent on each of these three. What do you conclude from this exercise?

Chapter 7

Exploring Happiness and Prosperity

In the previous chapter, we identified continuity of happiness and prosperity as the basic aspiration of every being and discussed the three basic requirements to fulfil this aspiration – having right understanding in the Self, Relationship with other human beings and working with nature to produce physical facility.

Now let us look at what is meant by the terms ‘happiness’ and ‘prosperity’.

Happiness

We are all interested in happiness and all our efforts are for happiness but what is happiness? Is this happiness something subjective that cannot be defined or is it something real that can be objectively defined? Here is a proposal for you to explore and verify -

We had discussed our natural acceptance – ‘what I want to be’

When ‘what I am’ is the same as ‘what I want to be’, I am happy

We had also discussed that we are not always what we want to be i.e., ‘what we are’ is not always the same as ‘what we want to be’.

This conflict within, between ‘what I want to be’ and ‘what I am’ is Unhappiness.

To delve deeper,

“The state or situation, in which I am, if there is harmony/synergy in it, then it is naturally acceptable to me to be in that state/situation”.

And to be in a state/situation that is naturally acceptable to me is “Happiness” so

“To be in a state of Harmony/Synergy is Happiness” or, in other words, Happiness is to be in harmony or **Happiness = Harmony**.

In the same way, “The state or situation, in which I am, if there is disharmony/contradiction in it, then it is not naturally acceptable to me to be in that state/situation”.

And to be forced to be in a state/situation that is not naturally acceptable to me is “Unhappiness” so

“To be forced to be in a state of Disharmony/Contradiction is Unhappiness” or, in other words, **Unhappiness = Disharmony.**

Now, to have the continuity of happiness that we all aspire for, we would need to look at the total expanse of our being, ensuring harmony in every aspect of living – we live as an individual; we also live with other people in our family, in the society and we are also embedded in nature. Thus the expanse of our living is at the following four levels (though we may or may not be aware of this):

1. As an Individual human being
2. As a member of a family
3. As a member of society
4. As a unit in nature/existence

Therefore, to have continuity of happiness, we need to:

Understand the
harmony
and
Live in harmony



at all levels of our being:

1. At the level of the individual human being
2. At the level of family
3. At the level of society and
4. At the level of nature/existence

And now let us look at what is meant by prosperity.

Prosperity

Prosperity is related to material things or what we referred to as physical facility. It would include things like food to eat, clothes to wear, shelter for protection, perhaps a two-wheeler etc. These are required and when we can see that we have more than adequate physical facility, we feel prosperous.

More than just physical facility, prosperity has to do with our feeling. The proposal is -

Prosperity is the feeling of having more than required physical facility.

For having the feeling of prosperity, there are two basic requirements:

1. Right assessment of the need for physical facility, along with its required quantity.
2. Ensuring the availability/production of more than required physical facility.

We can have a feeling of prosperity only if we are rightly able to assess our physical needs, along with their required quantity. Unless we know how much we need, how would we know that we have enough?

With right understanding, we can rightly assess our physical needs.

Without right understanding, without that right assessment, the feeling of prosperity cannot be assured, regardless of how much physical facility we accumulate.

Just assessing the need is not enough. We also need to ensure the availability or production of more than the required quantity. This requires skills, technology and production. With both of these, right assessment and availability, we have more than required physical facility. Over and above that, it is a matter of feeling that we have more than enough.

When you have the feeling of prosperity, you naturally think of nurturing and enriching others. On the other hand, if you feel deprived then you think of exploiting and depriving others.

Let us now look at some of the prevailing notions of happiness and prosperity in the society.

Prevailing Notions of Happiness

One prevailing notion is that continuity of happiness is possible through consumption of physical facility and enjoyment of favourable sensations.

Is continuity of happiness possible through physical facility?

Let us explore and study this phenomenon.

Physical thing → Contact with Body → Sensation (in Body) → Sensation is tasted by Self

- If taste is favourable → Happiness (Temporary)
- If taste is unfavourable → Unhappiness (Temporary)

We get happiness, or what appears to be happiness, when we eat our favourite sweet. What is happening here? A physical thing (the sweet), comes in contact with our tongue. We are able to taste the sweet. Taste is a sensation. If we find the sensation favourable/pleasant, we feel happy. If we find the sensation unfavourable/ unpleasant, we feel unhappy. You can observe this in yourself for any sensation – sound, touch, sight, taste or smell.

But can this ensure happiness in continuity?

You do get some sort of happiness from the sensation. However, this happiness is momentary, very short lived and it seems to pass through the following stages:

Tasty-Necessary → Tasty-Unnecessary → Tasteless-Unnecessary → Intolerable

At first, the physical facility seems tasty and necessary; then it becomes unnecessary while it retains the taste. With further consumption, it seems to have become tasteless and finally becomes intolerable. This applies to any physical facility.

For any sensation obtained from physical facility, be it sound, touch, sight, taste or smell, continuity of happiness is not possible. To try to get continuity of happiness from sensation, you may keep shifting from one sensation to another to another, but in vain.

In addition, the little temporary happiness you got from the taste is dependent on something outside, like the sweet in the above example. There is no guarantee that you will get the sweet as and when you want to derive happiness out of its taste.

Continuity of Happiness from Favourable Feeling from Others?

While one prevailing notion is that continuity of happiness is possible through consumption of physical facility and enjoyment of favourable sensations, another prevailing notion is that we can be happy by getting favourable feelings from others. We tend to feel happy when others pay attention to us, when they praise us, respect us, care for us or express any favourable feeling to us.

But is it possible to ensure continuity of happiness by receiving favourable feeling from others? Let us study this phenomenon.

Other Human Being → Expression of Feeling → Feeling Received and Evaluated by Self

- If feeling is favourable → Happiness (Temporary)
- If feeling is unfavourable → Unhappiness (Temporary)

When someone is expressing the right feeling (a feeling that is naturally acceptable to you- e.g., respect), you like to receive that feeling – you feel happy. But this is also not continuous and here again, if you see, you are dependent on the other to get that feeling again and again. Of course, if the other is expressing emotions that are not naturally acceptable to you (e.g., disrespect), you feel unhappy.

Is Happiness the same as Excitement?

The question here is whether the feeling we had in the above two instances is happiness or something else i.e.

- When we get a favourable sensation, is it really = happiness?
- Is the favourable feeling we receive from the other = happiness?

We will find that what we get in both cases is a sort of momentary pleasure. This is what is being referred to as excitement.

While happiness is a harmonious state within which is sustainable i.e., a state that can be continuous, excitement is short lived and unsustainable – we are unable to maintain its continuity. You can check this and verify it for yourself.

Prevailing Notions of Prosperity

Now let us look at the prevailing notions of prosperity: by and large, the notion is that accumulation of physical facility and prosperity are the same thing. It is generally assumed that the richer you are, the more prosperous you are, i.e., the more you have accumulated, the more prosperous you are. If this is your assumption, you pursue prosperity with an obsession for profit, for accumulation. This is happening all around. The major focus in society today is on accumulation of physical facility and in particular, on the accumulation of wealth/ money.

Today, most of the wealth in the world is owned by a very tiny percentage of people. Many such people are seen exploiting others and exploiting the Earth, in an effort to accumulate even more. Without clarity about how much is required, the effort is for an unlimited quantity of physical facility, and by almost any means. At first the effort to accumulate may be by legal means but later, it may often be seen to slip to even illegal means. This is all because the quantity required is undefined and there is a constant feeling of deprivation regardless of how much one has!

Test Your Understanding

1. Observe the activities you are involved in every day. For example, it could be activities that you enjoy, like watching a movie, playing video games on the phone, listening to music etc.

Are any of these activities giving you lasting happiness (i.e., do you wish to continue any activity indefinitely) or do you get ‘bored’ or restless with the activity after some time, want to discontinue the activity and switch to something else (i.e., do you keep shifting from one activity to another)?

Note your observations. What conclusions can you draw from your observations?

2. Take a large quantity of your favourite food (one that you find very tasty) even if it is not healthy. Start eating and find out if it makes you feel happy... If so, for how long? What could you deduce from this experiment?
3. Look around your house. Make a list of all the things (physical facility) you have - e.g., furniture, clothes, books, utensils etc.

Are you rightly utilising all your belongings - your clothes, furniture, books, utensils, space in the house etc.

What do you conclude? Do you think you are prosperous or do you think you are wealthy?

(If you are prosperous, you will rightly utilise what you already have and share it with others, nurturing others rather than exploiting them).

What is naturally acceptable to you (what do you want to be) - do you want to be prosperous or do you want to be wealthy?

Chapter 8

The Body as an Instrument of the Self **(The Self is Central to Human Existence)**

We saw that the Self and the Body are two distinct types of realities. Their needs, fulfilment, activities and responses are completely different. While the Self is a domain of consciousness, the Body is material and the two are in co-existence.

Self is Central; Body is a tool/instrument

The Self is the one that gives instructions to the Body (as and when the Self decides to involve the Body). The Self reads the sensations from the Body (as and when the Self decides to read them). All these transactions between the Self and the Body are in the form of information. No material transaction takes place.

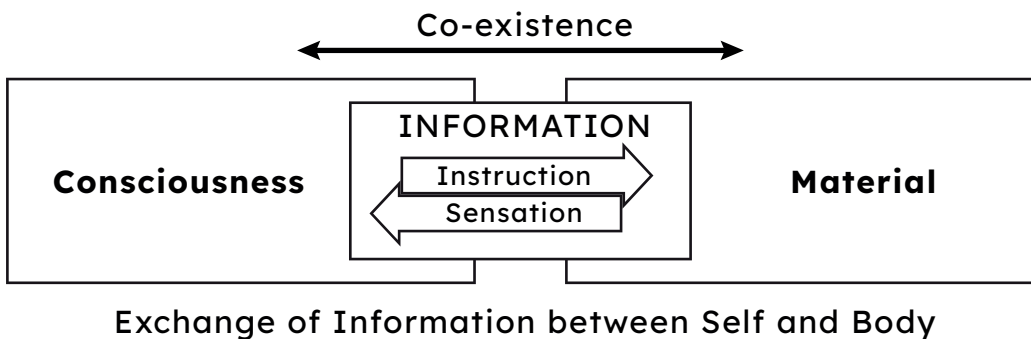
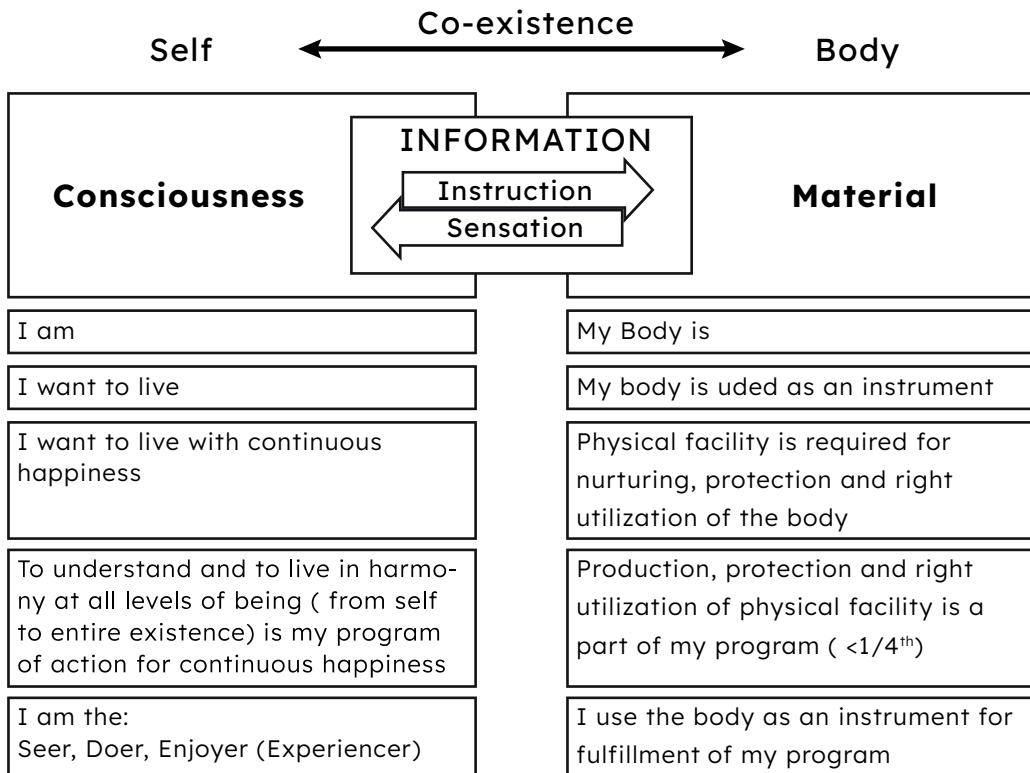


Figure - 8.1

Delving further into the details of the co-existence between the Self and the Body,



Role of Self (Consciousness) and Body (Material)

Figure - 8.2

The Self (consciousness) is there and the Body (material) is there. The Self has a will to live with continuous happiness. This need of the Self is fulfilled by right understanding and right feeling. In order to have the right understanding (and live with continuous happiness), the program of the Self is to understand harmony and to live in harmony at all levels of being—individual, family, society and nature/existence.

In this process, the Self uses the Body like a tool or an instrument. A Self with the right feeling has the feeling of responsibility towards the body – to nurture, protect and rightly utilize it. For this, physical facility is required from time to time. A part of the program of the Self is to produce this required physical facility and also to protect and rightly utilise it. This production, protection and right utilisation of physical facility is only a part of the full program of the Self.

Physical facility is required primarily for you to ensure harmony with the Body – your Body and the Body of your family members.

Thus the need of the Self is the primary need of any human being. The program of understanding harmony and living in harmony at all the four levels (individual, family, society, and nature/existence) is the complete program of the Self for continuous happiness. In this program, the Self uses the Body like a useful tool or instrument.

Self is the Seer-Doer-Enjoyer

The Self is the Seer – the one that sees the reality; the one that understands the reality; the one in whom right understanding takes place.

The Self is the Doer – the Self is the doer means that it is the Self that decides, the one who takes the decision of what to do, to do or not to do, when to do etc.

The Self is the Enjoyer (Experiencer) – It is the Self that experiences happiness and unhappiness. In that sense, the Self is the enjoyer.

The Body is merely an instrument, a physio-chemical entity.

Thus it is the Self that is central to the existence of a human being and the Self uses the Body like an instrument or tool for fulfilling its aspiration for happiness. It is the Self that is the decision maker. It plays the major role; it is the seer, doer and enjoyer.

Test Your Understanding

1. Make a list of several of your daily activities like eating, sleeping, walking, talking etc. In every activity, note -
 - a. Who is deciding the activity – Body or Self?
 - b. Who is the one enjoying the activity – Body or Self?
 - c. Who takes the decision to change or stop the activity – Body or Self?
2. How is the need of the Self fulfilled? What is the program of the Self for living with continuous happiness?
3. What is the role and responsibility of the Self towards the body?

Chapter 9

Understanding Harmony in the Self

We discussed that the human being is a co-existence of the Self and the Body. We also discussed the needs, activities and response of the Self and those of the Body. We learnt that the Self is a unit of consciousness while the Body is a material entity and we saw that the Self makes all the decisions - regarding itself as well as the Body.

There is harmony in the human being when the needs of the Self as well as the needs of the Body are fulfilled:

- The need of the Self is for continuous happiness. It is fulfilled by right understanding and right feeling which are activities of consciousness.
- The need of the Body is physical facility. It is fulfilled by physio-chemical things which are material in nature.

To understand the human being, both the domain of consciousness as well as the domain of the material have to be understood. For a human being to be healthy (in harmony), both domains need to be fulfilled separately.

Now let us explore the activities of the Self and see how harmony can be ensured within the Self (among all the activities of the Self), resulting in the state of continuous happiness. Only when the Self is itself in harmony can it give the right instructions to the body so that the body also remains in harmony (i.e., in health)

We will also take another look at happiness and the significance of observing the activities within us in order to ensure our happiness.

Activities within the Self

We all have the power to desire, to think; we all have expectations from the outside. This has been depicted in the figure given below. See if you can observe some thoughts going on within yourself.

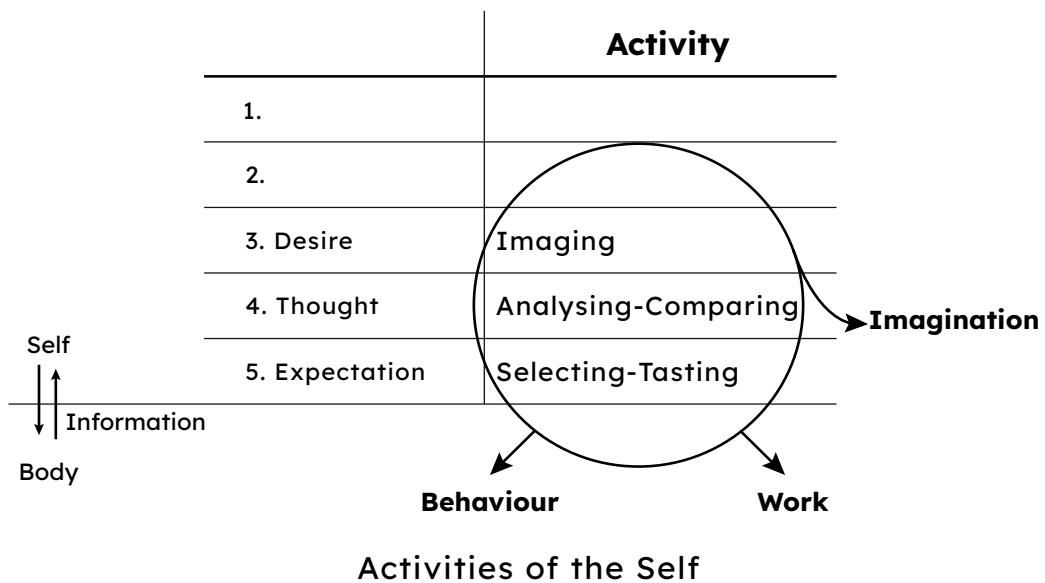


Figure - 9.1

When you desire something, what happens? An image form within you. For example, if you desire a big house (you want to become the owner of a big house), you have an image of a big house. Often, we may not be aware of our desires but we may be able to observe the image formed within. Desire is the imaging of ‘what you want to be’.

Thought or the power or capacity to think is for analysing and comparing, trying to work out the details of how to go about fulfilling the desire. So in the above example where you have a desire for a big house, you may now start thinking about the details of how to go about acquiring the big house e.g., you may start analysing and comparing the various ways in which you could fund it – how much capital you have, whether to take a bank loan or not, how much of a loan would suffice etc.; you may also start analysing how many rooms would be sufficient for the whole family etc. Here you are trying to work out the details of the image, trying to analyse the image – this is thought. You may have lots of possible ideas - you compare all the possibilities and end up narrowing down on some of them based on the comparison. So thought is the activity of analysing based on comparing various possibilities to fulfil your desire.

While desire is about 'what you want to be' (e.g., the desire to be healthy), thought is about 'how to do' (how to fulfil the desire e.g., how to be healthy).

Expectation is the power we have to select based on the taste of our choice. For example, when you wanted to be the owner of a big house (desire), you worked out the details by analysing and comparing various possibilities (thought); now you go further and fill in the finer details, like the colour of the walls, which paint would look nicer etc. – this is the activity of selecting. This selecting is done based on a taste you already have for it. For instance, if you had seen a particular type of wall texture and colour in your friend's house and you liked it (i.e., you had a taste of it), it is now a likeable taste within you. So now when you go to make a selection, you select a similar texture and colour based on the likeable taste you already have for it within you. This is expectation - the activity of selecting on the basis of a taste we have within us. When we say taste here, we are not limiting merely to the sense of taste but are referring to all of our 5 senses (the sense of touch, sight, hearing as well as smell).

For instance, you may see an advertisement of a new type of mobile phone and you like how it looks (i.e., you now have a taste for it) so you choose (select) to buy that particular type of mobile phone based on the taste you now already have for it within you. We may or may not be aware of our taste, but we keep selecting something or other based on our taste.

Try to observe the way you sit. You select the position and posture every few minutes. This is also based on your taste – the taste for comfort. At the root of selecting-tasting and analysing-comparing is the desire. You may have a desire to be comfortable, so you select a body posture that provides comfort. You may have a desire to be knowledgeable, so you analyse the courses available in your college and select some of them. At the root of every thought you have and every selection you make is a desire for something that you want to be and it is not just in the form of a mere image but it is an image that also contains some feeling, some purpose.

Can you observe within yourself and see that the activities of imaging, analysing-comparing and selecting- tasting are going on?

Activities of The Self Are Continuous

We said that we have the power or capacity to desire and we do this through the activity of imaging (and so we are able to make an image of our desire). Similarly, we have the power or capacity to think and we do this through the activity of analysing and hence are able to analyse. So also, we have the power to expect and we do this through the activity of selecting and so are able to select. You may be able to notice that you seem to be doing this all the time and have enough energy to keep doing this – in fact, these activities are continuously going on within you! Have you noticed that these powers within you are inexhaustible?

Try and observe if you are continuously desiring something or not – can you see that you have some desire or the other all the time? For instance, the desire to be happy – is that always there or do you feel there are times when you have no desire at all? Do you have some thought or the other continuously or is there any time when you stop thinking? Do you have some or the other expectation all the time or is there any time when you have no expectation?

To begin with, you may not be able to see that these activities are continuous but go on exploring, keep checking to see if there is any time when there is no desire, when there is no thought or when there is no expectation. Are these activities not going on or are they going on all the time and you are not aware of them? Like do you not always have the expectation to keep the Body comfortable? Isn't that why you keep selecting some body posture or the other?

Start by observing these activities within yourself during the day; later you may also be able to observe them during the night.

For now you can take this as a proposal that the activities of imaging, analysing-comparing and selecting- tasting are continuous – they are always going on within us; whether we are aware of them or not.

Activities Together Constitute Imagination

Now, if you put these activities together, it is termed imagination. We may

not immediately be able to observe our desire, thought and expectation separately and distinctly, but we may be able to see that something is going on within.

Try and observe this imagination within yourself for just five minutes – what do you see? You may be able to notice some 10, 20, 30 imaginations even in this brief period of 5 minutes. Some imagination or the other is going on all the time. Can you observe this? Look into yourself and see if the imagination within you is going on all the time or whether you can put a stop to it. You will find that some imagination or the other is going on within you all the time although you may not always be aware of it.

Why We Need to Observe Our Imagination

What's so important about the imagination going on within us? Why do we need to observe it? It is important for us to know what is going on within our imagination because all the decisions we make, we make in our imagination. Whether to do something or not, what to eat and what not to eat, who to befriend, how to interact with other human beings, with animals, with trees and plants in nature, in fact everything we do outside... we decide on doing it within our imagination first and only then behave accordingly. Are you able to see this?

When it comes to the expression outside (behaviour with other human beings or interaction/ work with nature), the Self uses the Body like an instrument. So, if I have a feeling of respect for someone and I wish to express it, I may greet him with folded hands (Namaste) i.e., I will instruct the body to fold the hands and perhaps bow down the head. Similarly, I may desire a healthy body and to fulfil that desire I may have various thoughts on the basis of which I make some selections and then express these selections outside e.g., instruct the body to consume only those foods that are nurturing for the body; instruct the body to spend time outdoors in the fresh air and plant some vegetables and fruit trees in the garden etc. Behaviour or work is thus simply one's imagination being expressed through the Body. For this, the body merely follows the instructions given by the Self.

What is Happiness?

We had spoken about this earlier - When your imagination is in line with your natural acceptance i.e., when 'what you are' is 'what you really want to be', you feel comfortable inside; you are in harmony – this is a state of happiness. On the contrary, when your imagination is not in line with your natural acceptance i.e., when 'what you are' is not 'what you really want to be', you feel uncomfortable inside; you are in disharmony – this is the state of unhappiness. Since we all basically aspire for happiness in continuity, it is extremely important for us to see what is going on in our imagination and to check whether it is in line with our natural acceptance or not.

When we are comfortable within, when we are in harmony within, when we are in a state of happiness within, our behaviour and work is also likely to be harmonious. When we are uncomfortable, in disharmony, confusion and unhappiness within, our behaviour and work is also likely to be disharmonious.

We can understand this better with the help of an example: you have a natural acceptance to keep the body healthy. However, you also like the taste of junk foods that are not so healthy for the body. If you so much as think about eating these foods you feel uncomfortable inside since this thought is not in line with your natural acceptance. And whenever you eat these junk foods, you will feel happy for a few moments (as long as the food is in contact with your tongue) but the moment the food goes down into the throat and is no longer in contact with your tongue, your happiness will also be gone. How long can you keep eating to sustain your need for continuous happiness? Is it possible to fulfil this need with a pleasurable taste?

Another example - Suppose you are thinking of taking revenge from someone and you do this for two hours and after two hours you drop the idea - is there any execution outside? There is no execution at the level of the Body - no execution in behaviour and no execution in work. However, a lot has taken place at the level of imagination and this becomes the source of your happiness or unhappiness. For these two hours when you were thinking of taking revenge and had a feeling of opposition which is not naturally acceptable to you, you were in the state of contradiction, of unhappiness. So, for two hours you were unhappy and the other person probably did not

even know about it as you did not express it outside!

Similarly, when you think about a friend with a feeling of respect for two hours, about how to express your feeling of respect to him, you are in harmony within because the feeling of respect is naturally acceptable to you. When you are in harmony within, you are in a state of happiness. Of course, if you express this feeling of respect to your friend, it will lead to happiness for your friend also, since respect is naturally acceptable to him as well.

Observe your own state of imagination and try to correlate your expression, in terms of behaviour and work. When is your behaviour fulfilling for the other? When is your work mutually enriching?

Find out if imagination is going on continuously in you or is there a point of time when there is no imagination taking place? Can you see that you decide at the level of imagination and that your behaviour and work is just the expression of your imagination? Can you see that you use your Body, as and when required, for expressing your decisions? You may be aware of it or you may not be aware of it, so keep observing and verifying this for yourself.

While the Self is central to the human being, this imagination is central to the Self because it is the imagination that decides the sense of happiness or unhappiness in the Self.

The imagination also connects the Self to the world outside, in terms of behaviour with human beings and work with the rest of nature.

Further, it also connects to the natural acceptance within.

In that sense the imagination plays a central role.

State of Imagination

When you try to observe your imagination, it may seem very difficult at first. Later you may be able to see a few thoughts with some gaps in between - you may remember some of the thoughts but not others. Some imaginations may be connected to each other; some may be disconnected and even very contrary to each other.

You may have noticed while reading this book that, from time to time, you had to read the same paragraph over more than once in order to comprehend it, even if you thought it was of interest to you. This is because, while reading, you are also thinking of many other things in between. For instance, when we mention “rasagulla”, you may visualise a rasagulla in your imagination - your attention gets drawn to it and you start thinking about it, perhaps about eating a rasgulla. In this way your imagination may ‘take off’ several times to something you unconsciously consider as more important to you (and therefore you start thinking about it) and each time, you may day dream like this for several minutes before ‘landing’ back!

If you start paying a little attention to what is going on within yourself, you will find that such imaginations are continuously going on within you, one after the other. We may or may not be aware of our imaginations. We may or may not be able to find out where they are coming from, but imaginations are going on in each one of us.

If you try to trace out your own imagination for five minutes, you will get an idea of the activities going on in you. You will find that you (Self) decide what goes on in your imagination and you decide based on what you consider valuable, what you consider important. When you do this exercise, you will find that many of your imaginations are in harmony with each other while some are contradictory to each other or contrary to your natural acceptance.

Find out how you feel when your imaginations are contrary to each other – are you comfortable or uncomfortable? You will find that only when your imagination is in line with your natural acceptance, you are comfortable, you are in harmony; you are in a state of happiness. This is a significant observation to make. It points to the fact that your happiness and unhappiness depend on your own imagination! Your imagination is continuously going on within you and it is making you happy or unhappy, and you are not even aware of this!

Once you start looking at your imagination, becoming aware of your desire, thought and expectation, you will be able to see the state of your imagination – it may be well organized, in harmony or it may be a random

mixture of harmony and contradiction. Each desire may be in line with your natural acceptance (in harmony) or in contradiction (disharmony) with your natural acceptance.

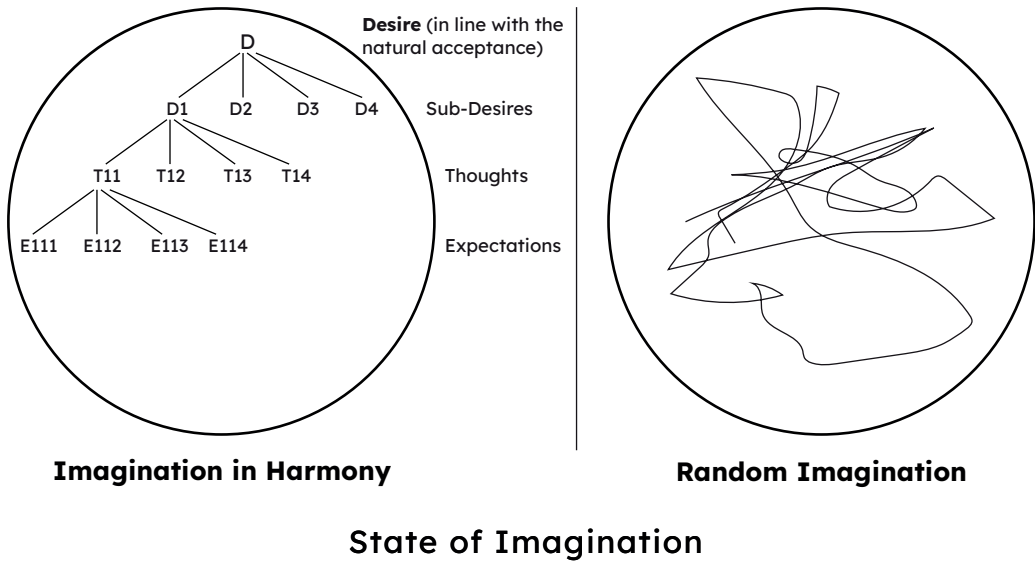


Figure - 9.2

This imagination is significant because all the decisions are made here! Everything you feel, everything you think and everything you do is decided here. Your state of imagination can give you a very precise idea about your life. If the imagination is well organised and in harmony, your life will be in harmony – it will be happy. On the other hand, if your imagination is random and confused, so will your life be – sometimes happy, sometimes unhappy.

Possible Sources of Imagination

We mentioned that the seed or root of our imagination is our desire. Now the next question is –“Where is this desire coming from”? What is the motivation for the imagination? Are we deciding it for ourselves or is someone else deciding for us –like our parents, friends or the social environment etc.? You might think that it is obvious that you are the one deciding but if you look deeper, you may find that many of your desires have come from family, teachers, your friends and so on.

You will find that there are three possible sources that may motivate your imagination:

1. Preconditioning
2. Sensation
3. Natural Acceptance

Preconditioning as a source of motivation for the imagination

Preconditioning refers to the ideas, beliefs, views or assumptions we have as a result of our own past experiences or as a result of the views prevailing in our family or society at the time.

For instance, if you evaluate your desire to wear clothes that are in fashion, where is this desire coming from? Is it your own desire or is it being moulded by what is “trending” in society at the time. If the trend is for tight, faded or torn jeans, you may wear tight, faded/torn jeans, if the trend changes to a suit and tie, you may have the desire to buy a suit and tie and so on. However, if you ask your natural acceptance whether you want to be comfortable or uncomfortable in the clothes you wear, you will get a very clear answer and on that basis you may e.g., choose to wear loose fitting cotton clothes instead, realising that you wear clothes to protect the body, not to get the feeling of respect from someone or because someone else is wearing a particular type of outfit.

In this manner, you may be able to see that a very large percentage of desires that you thought were yours are actually borrowed from outside; you have made them your desires under some influence from outside and you were not even aware of this!

A little awareness will show us that the way we talk, the clothes we wear, the choices of food we select to eat, the way we behave... most of these are coming from our preconditioning. And unless our preconditioning has been verified and found to be in line with our natural acceptance, it may lead to disharmony (unhappiness) within.

For instance tight clothes, as in the example above, have often been shown

to hamper the blood circulation in the body. If such clothes are worn often, they may lead to damage to various organs. So not only do the tight clothes make you feel uncomfortable when you wear them, but they may also eventually damage the body and with all this, you become unhappy.

Sensation as a source of motivation for the imagination

Another major source of our desires/our imagination is the sensation – the information we get from the body through any of the five sense organs – the ears (sound), the eyes (sight), the skin (touch), the tongue (taste) and the nose (smell).

For instance, you may be watching a movie on TV or you tube and you see an ad for a restaurant – you see a delicious looking cheesy pizza with a lot of colourful veggies... now this sets the tone for your imagination; you now start desiring the pizza. A moment before seeing the ad, you had no desire for a pizza but the moment you saw the ad (perhaps the sight of the cheese, the bright colour of the vegetables...) you developed the desire to eat a pizza and started thinking about it, imagining the warm cheese melting in your mouth... And all along, you think that this is your desire!

One problem with borrowing this type of a desire from outside is that the ad/company is making you think about whatever it is they want you to think – your remote control is not with you and you are enslaved! Another problem is that you have not verified the desire through your natural acceptance and so it may end up leading to unhappiness (since pizza is not nourishing for the body) – if you give in to this desire and eat pizza, it may result in gas, bloating, acidity and constipation and then you become unhappy! Not only that, if you do this again and again, you are likely to develop lifestyle problems like high blood pressure, diabetes etc. causing you even more unhappiness!

In this way you may have accumulated many desires that are not really your own; they are either a result of some preconditioning or sensation as described above. In both cases, the desire is not innately yours; you have acquired it from outside. That means the remote control for your imagination is not with you- your imagination is being triggered either by an assumption

from outside or a sensation from outside. In either case you become like a puppet whose control is somewhere outside- it is like you are enslaved to the outside (your desires and thoughts are being governed by someone other than you yourself).

Question is – how to not fall into this trap? How to not get enslaved to the outside? A simple method is to verify each and every desire that comes from outside with the help of your natural acceptance. If the desire is naturally acceptable to you, it is right for you; if the desire is not naturally acceptable to you, it is not right for you.

Natural Acceptance as source of motivation for imagination- Most authentic

Besides the above two sources that motivate our desires/our imagination, there is a third source of motivation for our imagination and that is our natural acceptance. Currently this may be motivating only a very small percentage of our desires but this is the most authentic source of our desires because this is coming from deep within us – not from outside. And this can be the source of motivation for all our desires, all our imagination.

For instance, ask yourself the questions—

What is naturally acceptable to you

– to respect others or to disrespect others?

– to eat food that nurtures your body or harms your body?

The answers you get are from within you – from your natural acceptance and therefore are right for you. It is that simple. If you are aware of your natural acceptance and you are aware of your imagination, you can make the right choices (choices that are in line with the natural acceptance) all the time.

It is then that we are truly liberated – no longer enslaved to the outside for our desires - how we feel and think...and therefore, of course, how we behave are all then decided by us after verifying for ourselves that it is right for us. Our behaviour then becomes definite (always in line with our natural

acceptance).

Ultimately, we will find that we have a natural acceptance for the feelings of –

Relationship

Harmony and

Co-existence

We will refer to these a little later.

For a more detailed discussion on issues related to the Self, you can refer to the book “A foundation course in human values and professional ethics” mentioned in the references.

Test Your Understanding

1. When do you tend to make the right decisions – when you are comfortable within or uncomfortable within?
2. When you go to make purchases at the grocery store/supermarket, observe the basis on which you decide what to purchase. For each purchase you make, observe—

Is your choice of the purchase based on

- Preconditioning (e.g., because your friend has it too)
- Favourable sensation (e.g., because you like the taste of the food, the ‘look’ of the dress etc.)
- Natural acceptance (e.g., choice of food that will keep the body healthy, choice of clothes that have practical utility – that are required, are appropriate for the season etc.)?

It may be interesting for you to note what percentage of your choices are based on your natural acceptance.

3. List a few ways by which the choices you make on a daily basis are impacting the health of the body?

4. At a time when you are not busy or preoccupied with tasks, sit down in a comfortable position by yourself at a quiet spot. Close your eyes and try to look within. Are you able to observe some thoughts going on within yourself? If yes, try and observe the feeling at the base of these thoughts and check if it is in line with your natural acceptance. Do this practical exercise for 10-15 minutes daily and note any changes you observe in yourself after a month.

If you are not able to see your thoughts at this time, continue to sit and attempt the practice daily for 10-15 minutes maintaining your decision to observe and slowly you will start observing your thoughts and then the feeling at the base of the thoughts. Make this a daily practice and note your findings at the end of a month as mentioned above.

Chapter 10

Understanding the Human Body and Human Constitution

We have seen how every human being is a co-existence of two realities – the Self and the body. We also saw the characteristics of each of these: how the needs and activities of every Self are continuous; how every Self responds on the basis of assuming and knowing, how every Self has the faculty of natural acceptance, how each one of us aspires to live with happiness – these are similarities we all have at the level of the Self. Similarly, at the level of the body, each one of us as a human being has a body that has temporary needs and temporary activities as we saw; the recognition and fulfilment at the level of the body is definite in each and every human being. These are some of the similarities we saw at the level of the body.

Besides these, there are several other similarities at the level of the body. Each of us has a human body that is made up of trillions of cells. Each cell is a complete structure that has its own independent function and yet is interconnected with, interdependent on and impacted by other cells in the body. Several groups of cells and the material surrounding them come together to perform a similar function – these are referred to as tissues – thus the body has nervous tissue, muscular tissue, connective tissue, epithelial tissue etc. Two or more different tissue types come together to form an organ – an anatomically distinct structure in the body. Every organ performs one or more specific physiologic functions e.g. the heart pumps blood to all parts of the body. A group of related organs work together to perform related functions in the body. These are organ systems e.g. the digestive system includes the stomach, small intestine, large intestine etc. and all of these together play their part in digesting food; the circulatory system includes the heart and all the blood vessels that participate in the circulation of blood throughout the body and so on.

Thus, Cells are organised into Tissues → Organs → Organ Systems and all of

these work together in harmony for the good of the body as a whole. This is true for the body of every human being. If we look at some of the work of these cells, tissues, organs and organ systems (their activities) in a little more detail, we find that several activities are taking place in the body as a part of its own self-organisation – activities for which you (the Self) do not have to keep giving moment to moment instructions. As an example, let's look at the activity of digesting food: you (the Self) decide and instruct the body to put food into the mouth but you don't do anything to digest it! Not only does the body digest the food but it also converts this food into the cells of the various tissues and organs of the body leading to growth in the body. This it does by various chemical processes that go on in the body in the form of breakdown of specific substances (**catabolism**) and formation of new substances (**anabolism**).

The body also maintains its internal environment within a definite range e.g. the body's temperature, the fluid content in the body, the electrolyte levels, the blood sugar etc. These are all maintained in a very definite range. The body is also able to remove unwanted substances through processes of cleansing (through the breath and in the form of sweat, urine, stool etc.). These are some examples of similarities that all human beings have at the level of the human body.

While we all have similarities at the level of the Self and the Body, we saw that we have many differences too – both at the level of the Self and the Body. We all have imagination going on within us continuously in the Self, but the content of our imagination differs -some of us may have the tendency to become anxious easily while others may be more calm; some of us may have a sharp memory while others may tend to be forgetful and so on.

At the level of the body also we can see many differences – some of us are short, others are tall; some are fair skinned while others are darker skinned etc. Besides these differences in the appearance and form of the body we also tend to behave differently in response to the various sensations in the body – e.g., some of us feel extremely cold in cold weather but are comfortable in warm weather while others are comfortable in cold weather but find hot weather unbearable!

Thus, differences at the level of the body could be any of the following—

- Physical differences
- Biochemical differences
- Physiological differences

Similarly, differences at the level of the part of the Self that keeps changing (mind/lower mind – the part where the imagination is going on) could be in any of the following

- Different expectations from outside – Likes and dislikes
- Intellectual differences – How we think
- Emotional differences – How we feel

Yet, there is one part of the Self that is unchanging and similar in all of us (the pure or true Self or the higher mind as it is sometimes referred to or what is termed as the natural acceptance).

Coming back to the differences, they have been studied in depth in various traditions including the Indian tradition and form the basis for the classification into various body types or ‘constitutions’. Let us see why we need to know about these differences and the different constitutions.

Importance of Understanding the Human Constitution:

An understanding of the human constitution helps us understand the differences in physical structure and differences in behaviour that we all exhibit as individuals. In a situation like a traffic jam on the way to work, one person may become anxious, resulting in an increased heartbeat in the body while another individual may get angry and irritated and blow his car horn repeatedly while a third may turn on the FM radio in his car and just relax!!.

So at the level of the body, we can have different body types and look different from one another and at the level of the Self we have different

tendencies and respond/react differently in the same situation. These differences and the different constitutions are important to know about because when you make a program for your health, you can decide the kind of diet and lifestyle that are most suited for you based on your constitution.

As an example, a type of food that is suitable for your constitution may not be suitable for the constitution of another - a glass of orange juice may be refreshing and energising for you but may cause heart burn or acid reflux in another. Similarly, a disease may manifest in a particular way in an individual with one type of constitution but differently in another; the same drug or therapy may produce one type of effect in a person with a particular constitution but a different effect in a person with a different constitution etc. So, in order to have an idea of what approach to take, what lifestyle to follow, what diet to adopt on a daily and seasonal basis, it helps to know about your constitution. Knowing your constitution can also help you decide what measures to take to prevent diseases that you may be susceptible to.

The Different Constitutions and their Characteristics

Now that we have seen why it is important to know about our constitution, here is a proposal for you:

All matter, including the body, is a sum total of five fundamental attributes and their interplay and interaction. These five attributes, moving from gross to subtle, are – earth, water, fire, air and ether/space, with earth being the most gross and space being the most subtle. Ancient cultures in lands like Greece, Persia, Babylonia, Japan, Tibet and India have been able to get to this or a conclusion similar to this. Of these basic five, water and air are two attributes in the body that are easy for us to appreciate and fire refers to the attribute of heat.

This brings us to another proposal for you to explore, one that comes to us and has been studied in a lot of detail in the Indian tradition:

The combination of the five fundamental attributes results in three basic types of human constitutions, each with its own specific characteristics. Let us call these three fundamental constitutions (body types) - A, B and C. In a

moment we will study the various distinguishing features or characteristics of these three constitution types but before we do that, it is appropriate to acknowledge at this time that in the traditional Indian system of Ayurveda, this 'A' constitution corresponds to the 'Vata' or Air-Space/Ether Constitution; the 'B' type is the 'Pitta' or Fire- Water Constitution and the 'C' type is the 'Kapha' or Earth-Water Constitution. In more recent times (in the 1940's to be precise), American psychologist "William Herbert Sheldon" (PhD, MD) put forward a theory on constitutional psychology that associated somatotypes (body types) with human temperaments. He referred to these three body types as 'Ectomorph', 'Mesomorph' and 'Endomorph'. The Ectomorph closely co-relates to 'A', the Mesomorph to 'B' and the Endomorph to 'C'. Other traditional systems may also have similar such classifications of their own.

Let us now look at the specific characteristics of each of these constitutional types.

Type 'A' Constitution

(The Air-Space/'Vata'/Ectomorph type)

Individuals with this Constitution tend to have the following characteristics—

Physical Characteristics—

- Light thin build, light bones and muscles, scanty (very little) fat, cold and dry skin
- Quick in activity; rapid gait
- Irregular digestion, irregular hunger
- Inability to gain weight easily
- Light interrupted sleep



Mental Characteristics—

- Vivacious, imaginative, creative, spontaneous, changeable
- Extremely enthusiastic, love excitability and change
- Quick to grasp, quick to forget
- Seem to get energy in bursts, have bursts of emotions that are easily forgotten
- Sensitive

Movement is characteristic in such people - in both mind and body

Type 'B' Constitution

(The Fire-Water/'Pitta'/Mesomorph type)

Individuals with the Fire-Water Constitution tend to have the following characteristics—

Physical Characteristics—

- Moderate build
- Moderate strength and endurance
- Determined stride
- Early greying of hair, early balding, copper/brown hair
- Tendency to have freckles/blemishes on skin → acne
- Strong digestion - ravenous hunger and thirst
- Wake up at night feeling hot and thirsty



Mental Characteristics—

- Are enterprising, like challenges
- Have a sharp intellect, fiery mind
- Decisive and articulate
- Critical thinking, take command of situations
- Good sense of judgement
- Live by their watch
- Moderate memory

Type B people are strong willed, determined and tend to have leadership qualities.

Type ‘C’ Constitution

(The Earth-Water/‘Kapha’/Endomorph type)

Individuals with the Earth-Water Constitution tend to have the following characteristics—

Physical Characteristics—

- Heavy build
- Bones and muscles - heavy, soft and firm
- Steady energy
- Maximum strength and endurance
- Heavy prolonged sleep
- Gliding walk, slow and graceful action
- Slow digestion - mild hunger
- Tend to be Obese - Hold on to fluids, fat → Gain weight easily, find it hard to lose






Mental Characteristics—

- Slow to grasp but good retention
- Affectionate, tolerant and forgiving
- Tranquil and relaxed personality
- Happy with things as they are, don't want to change too much
- Don't get worried or angry easily
- When stressed, become more complacent and possessive
- Respect other people's feelings, have genuine empathy
- Seek emotional comfort in eating

Tend to hold on – To fluids, fat, emotions, belongings

Chart depicting Characteristics of the Constitutions in more detail:

Type	A 	B 	C 
Features			
Per Ayurveda	Air-Space (Vata)	Fire-Water (Pitta)	Earth-Water (Kapha)
Per Sheldon	Ectomorph	Mesomorph	Endomorph
General body build	Emaciated and lean Prominent tendons	Moderate build Loose and delicate musculature	Well built Muscular body and smooth musculature
Body weight	Light	Medium	Heavy
Body strength	Weak	Moderately strong	Strong
Joints	Loose joints, production of sound in the movement of joints	Relaxed joints and loose ligaments	Strong and steady joints, smooth and slow in movement
Skin	Dry, cracked, wrinkled (Particularly hands and feet)	Appearance of wrinkles at an early age, patchy pigmentation, recurrent occurrence of pimples or boils	Smooth, oily and glossy skin

Eyes	Dusky	Coppery red colour	Whitish
Hair	Rough and thin	Soft, coppery red	Smooth, dense and dark
Tolerance to heat and cold	Intolerance to cold, prefers hot weather.	Intolerance to heat, prefers cold weather	Tolerant to hot weather
Perspiration	Less in quantity	More in quantity	Less in quantity
Physical strength	Less physical strength, gets fatigued early	Moderate physical strength	Good physical strength
Speech and voice	Talkative, swift speech	Talks rapidly with aggression	Moderate in talk, speaks gently
Preferred diet	Likes foods that are sweet, sour and salty to taste	Prefers cold foods; dislikes sour and hot substances	Prefers dry and hot foods
Digestion	Irregular digestion	Quick and efficient digestion, intense hunger and thirst	Weak digestion
Bowel movements	Hard, tendency towards constipation	Soft bowel movements	Moderate bowel movements
Sleep	Less or interrupted sleep	Moderate	Deep sleep
Mental qualities	Fickle/ unsure, mind changes rapidly	Full of Pride Bold	Steady and firm Courageous
Response to situations	Gets 'stressed' (tense) almost always	Gets tense only occasionally	Rarely gets stressed/ tense even in difficult situations
Initiation of work	Very quick/almost immediate	Rapid but after giving some thought	Slow and after prolonged thought
Memory	Poor	Medium	Good
Grasping	Quick	Medium	Slow
Mood	Changes quickly	Changes but not very quickly	Unchangeable or changes after long time

What is your Constitution?

The above table can help you to know your own constitution. You may have a dominance of one or two of the above constitution types or you may be a combination of all these three types of constitutions. Answering the questionnaire below can also help you know your constitution.

Know Your Constitution

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Ht.

Wt.

BMI

SI. No.	Feature	Air-Space/Vata/ Ectomorph	Fire-water/Pitta/ Mesomorph	Earth-Water/ Kapha/ Endomorph
1.	Appetite	Variable	Strong	Less
2.	Bowel habit	Irregular, hard dry stool	Two or more times a day	Regular
3.	Sleep	5-6 hours, easily interrupted	6-8 hours, deep sleep	More than 8 hours, uninterrupted
4.	Food consumed	Variable	Large quantity	Less quantity
5.	Memory	Good short-term memory	Sharp memory	Good long-term memory
6.	Mood	Changes quickly	Intense and changes rapidly	Stable, patient
7.	Response to challenges	Uncertain, worried, indecisive	Irritable, impatient, quick to get angry	Stable, balanced, patient
8.	Stamina	Less	Moderate	Good
9.	Perspiration	Normal	Excess with foul smell	Less
10.	Speed of Gait	Quick/fast/rapid	Moderate	Slow steady gait
11.	Voice	Unclear, speaks fast, omits words	Clear pronunciation, speaks fast	Clear and sweet voice, speaks slowly
12.	Temperature	Cold extremities, low body temp	Sensation of heat in the body, high temp	Feels cold, Low body temp
13.	Skin	Rough, dry, coarse	Soft, sensitive	Soft, unctuous
14.	Nails	Thin, rough, brittle	Coppery, oily	Long, strong and thick
15.	Teeth	Irregular, big or small, broken	Medium with gaps	Even, white, shining
16.	Eyes	Off white	Yellowish	Whitish
17.	Joints	Have low flexibility, make cracking sounds	Flexible, move with ease	Strong, well covered with muscles and tendons
18.	BMI (Weight in kg/Height in m ²) Normal =18.5-24.9	<19	19-25	>25

Constitutional Type	Total Marked features			Percentage			
	A	B	C	AB	AC	BC	ABC
'A' Vata/Ectomorph							
'B' Pitta/Mesomorph							
'C' Kapha/Endomorph							
Decision	A	B	C	AB	AC	BC	ABC

Now that you have a fairly good idea about your constitution, how do you assess whether you are healthy or not? Here is another questionnaire for you.

Are You Healthy? (Health Assessment Questionnaire)

Answer the following questions for yourself.

Name:

Gender:

D.O.B.: (Date/Month/Year)

SI. No.	Questions	Yes	No
1.	Do you have a good appetite regularly/usually		
2.	Do you enjoy your food?		
3.	Feel comfortable after eating (Do not usually have bloating, belching, persistent fullness of abdomen or pain after eating food)		
4.	Have regular bowel movement one to two times daily		
5.	Normal urination regularly		
6.	Normal sweating without bad odor		
7.	Normal skin texture and color (e.g., without black areas around eyes, armpit, waist etc./ excessively moist, oily, or dry, wrinkled or puffy skin)		
8.	Proportionate musculature		
9.	Proportionate distribution of fat (e.g., waist line less than hip line)		
10.	Normal functioning of sense organs (well-functioning eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin)		

SI. No.	Questions	Yes	No
11.	Generally resistant to colds, coughs, fevers, loose motions etc.		
12.	Able to tolerate strong odours, dust or pollen		
13.	Do not look or feel older than your biological age		
14.	Usually feel happy with a sense of wellbeing		
15.	Have normal healthy sleep and feel fresh after waking up		
16.	Sleep is good (not disturbed by bad dreams)		
17.	Can withstand routine physical activities without any difficulty		
18.	Able to tolerate cold and hot climates without any trouble		
19.	Maintain calm and balance in various positive and negative life situations		
20.	Have a positive attitude towards life		
21.	Tend to forgive easily		
22.	Able to take the right decisions quickly at the right time		
23.	Have healthy relationships in the family		
24.	Have healthy relationships in society		
25.	Have a healthy and happy married life		

Assessment

Less than 10	Very Unhealthy
11-15	Minimally healthy
16-20	Moderately healthy
21-25	Completely Healthy

Cause of Ill-health in the body = Imbalance in the basic attributes

When there is a balance in the fundamental attributes, there is health.

By the same token, whenever there is an imbalance in the fundamental attributes, it results in ill-health.

Causes of Imbalance in the Constitutional attributes

Causes of Imbalance in the ‘A’/Air-Space (‘Vata’)/Ectomorph Constitution:

- Physical strain - being of a light build, the body is very sensitive to physical strain

- Emotional stress of any kind (e.g., grief, fear etc.) - tend to react with anxiety
- Change in routine e.g., skipping meals, sleeping late, going on frequent trips etc.
- Dryness or anything leading to constipation (e.g., low fibre foods) - due to already having a tendency to dryness and constipation
- Cold food, raw food, iced beverages and other difficult to digest foods due to a tendency towards irregular digestion

Physical Indicators of Imbalance in 'A' Constitution:

- Constipation, intestinal gas, IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome), weight loss
- Loss of energy, low stamina, light headed or spacy feeling, tremors or shakiness in body,
- Back pain, muscle spasms, aching and arthritic joints, menstrual cramps and dysmenorrhea
- Dry rough skin, intolerance to cold weather
- High blood pressure (BP)

Mental Indicators of Imbalance in 'A' Constitution:

- Worry, fear, anxiety, an overactive, 'spinning' mind
- Lack of mental focus and short attention span, forgetfulness
- Impatience
- Depression

Behavioural Indicators of Imbalance in 'A' Constitution:

- Tendency to overexert, getting tired/fatigued easily
- Insomnia, restlessness, inability to relax
- Low appetite
- Impulsiveness, lack of reliability

Causes of Imbalance in 'B'/Fire-Water ('Pitta')/Mesomorph Constitution:

- Reacting to stress with suppressed anger, frustration or resentment
- Making excessive demands on yourself
- Constant pressure of dead lines
- Worry about wasting time
- Hot and humid weather
- Severe sunburn
- Hot, spicy or oily food
- Food with excessive salt
- Fermented foods like cheese, vinegar, sour cream, alcohol etc.
- Fatigue

Physical Indicators of Imbalance in 'B' Constitution:

- Skin inflammation/boils/acne
- Heartburn/acidity/ulcers
- Haemorrhoids ('Piles')/burning in rectal region
- Crohn's disease
- Excessive hunger or thirst
- Hot flashes
- Foul body odour
- Bad breath

Mental Indicators of Imbalance in 'B' Constitution:

- Sharp tongue
- Anger, hostility, irritability
- Impatience

- Resentment
- Waking up frustrated and irritated
- Over achiever
- Overly competitive

Behavioural Indicators of Imbalance in ‘B’ Constitution:

- Outbursts of temper
- Argumentative stand
- Tyrannical behavior
- Intolerance to delays
- Judgmental about self and others (criticising self and others)
- Constant attempts at perfectionism

Causes of Imbalance in ‘C’/Earth-Water (‘Kapha’)/Endomorph Constitution:

- Stress - reacting to stress by withdrawing/feeling insecure or unwanted
- Possessing, storing and accumulating things (associated with physiological changes in body)
- Being dependent on or being over protective in (holding on to) relationships
- Cold, damp, snowy weather (feel depressed in winter)
- Sugary, salty, fatty or heavy foods, fried foods, dairy products like cheese, milk, ice-cream etc.
- Sleeping late repeatedly for more than a few days in a row
- Weight gain (feel depressed about it)
- Hereditary/familial tendencies towards obesity, allergies, Diabetes

Physical Indicators of Imbalance in ‘C’ Constitution:

- Intolerance to cold and damp weather

- Runny or blocked nose/congestion of sinuses
- Allergies, asthma, chest congestion
- Fluid retention in tissues
- Bloating
- Pale Skin
- Loose and aching joints
- High cholesterol, heaviness, weight gain
- Formation of cysts in body

Mental Indicators of Imbalance in ‘C’ Constitution:

- Dullness and mental inertia
- Laziness
- Stupor
- Depression
- Being over possessive and over attached in relationships
- Stuck in thoughts and actions

Behavioural Indicators of Imbalance in ‘C’ Constitution:

- Holding on to positions, fluids and fats
- Craving for creamy, sweet, heavy and dairy foods
- Greedy
- Dull and lethargic
- Slow movements
- Excessive sleep
- Procrastination
- Inability to accept change
- Cluttered mind, body and surroundings.

Correcting a constitutional imbalance

We have just looked at the causes of imbalance in the various constitutions and the characteristic features of this imbalance. Though you may have certain physical and mental tendencies as a result of your constitution, it does not, however, mean that you have to be enslaved to these tendencies for life.

As you go along you may be able to see that you have the potential to overcome many of these tendencies in a way that you no longer find them to be compulsive patterns but rather are able to go beyond them and choose to have harmony within yourself and in the body such that there is health and you can lead a happier, healthier and more fulfilled life (despite the constitution you may have been born with).

One way in which you can overcome some of the tendencies you have as a result of your constitution is to modify your diet accordingly and have a daily and seasonal routine that is aligned with the rhythms in nature. We will discuss this in great detail as we go along further on our journey into health

Constitution and Diet

The table given below shows the different constitutions and the qualities of food substances that are suitable to the specific constitutions.

SI. No.	Constitution	Qualities of food substances that are suitable
1.	'A'/Air-Space (Vata)/Ectomorph	Sweet, sour or salty foods (unctuous and hot)
2.	'B'/Fire-Water (Pitta)/Mesomorph	Sweet, bitter or astringent foods (these are cold in nature)
3.	'C'/Earth-Water (Kapha)/Endomorph	Bitter, pungent or astringent foods (these are light, un-unctuous, dry and hot in nature)

If you consume food according to your constitution i.e., if you consume food that is suitable to your constitution, you will need to make less effort to have good health in the body.

Given in the appendix is a chart depicting various foods and their effects on the different constitutional types. With the help of this you can choose the foods to consume on a regular basis (those that are best suited for your constitutional type) so as to keep your body healthy.

Test Your Understanding

1. With the help of the questionnaire given in the chapter, identify your own constitution. Is your constitution in balance or imbalance?
2. If your constitution is not in balance, try and identify the physical, mental and behavioural characteristics in you that indicate the imbalance in your constitution.
3. Answer the health assessment questionnaire. On the basis of the score you got, are you – completely healthy, moderately healthy, minimally healthy or very unhealthy? If you are not completely healthy, what do you need to do to become healthy and if you are completely healthy, what do you think you need to do to stay healthy?

Part III

Universal Health Principles and Specific Recommendations for Health

Chapter 11

Universal Health Principles

Now that we have a better understanding of the human being and what we aspire for as human beings, let us look at how we can understand health in a better way, in light of the reality of who we are and how we are all interconnected – not just with our family members but with all of humanity and in fact with everything in this existence. Here is a proposal for you to explore.

When we look at the reality of who we are, we find that the reality is one – the same for all – e.g., the reality of the human being is that it is a co-existence of Self and Body – all human beings are a co-existence of Self and Body. If we look at the Self, the reality of the Self is that it has a need for happiness. Every Self has this need and in every Self this need for happiness is fulfilled by right understanding and right feeling within the Self. Similarly, every Body is physio-chemical and has physio-chemical needs that are temporary ... and so on. So we can see that fundamentally, at the core, the reality is one – the same for all.

If we base things on this reality, we can formulate some principles regarding health which are fundamental and same for all. What is meant by a health principle? A health principle is a natural law that impacts our health as a human being. Just as the law of gravity is a law that is in place on this earth and this law fundamentally impacts all of us human beings living on this planet, similarly, a health principle is a natural law based on the reality of who we are and how we are interconnected with things around us.

The reality is one although we may perceive it differently, interpret it differently; we may see the one reality through our different perspectives based on our past experiences, our beliefs etc. However, if the reality is one, the principles based on the reality should be universal – they should apply to all human beings and be the same for all. Thus these fundamental/basic health principles can also be referred to as universal health principles. By

understanding these principles we can understand how the harmony of the body is being maintained and what we need to do in order to be healthy.

Through these basic principles specific recommendations can be derived. For instance, one universal health principle is that the body is a material unit that is temporary and undergoes change with respect to time. On the basis of this health principle, some specific recommendations can be made e.g., recommendations regarding the intake of food - based on the changing requirements of a body that is undergoing change, the recommendations for intake of food will be different and specific for the different ages. For instance, newborn babies (since they have no teeth) are recommended to have an intake only of mother's milk till about six months of age when their teeth start erupting; slightly older children are recommended to have an intake of food that is rich in protein (the formation of new tissues in the body of a growing child requires ample protein). On the other hand, the recommended intake for a middle-aged adult would have less protein in the diet unless the person is doing heavy manual labour (an adult body is no longer actively growing hence its protein requirement is less) and so on.

With an understanding of the principles and with the help of the specific recommendations based on them, we can implement these recommendations through various practices in our practical day to day living in order to be healthy and stay healthy (we will get to these in the sections ahead).

Needless to say, these are all again proposals for you to explore into and verify for yourself.

Let us now start with the Universal health principles. What would be the criteria for these basic universal principles?

The principles would need to be

- 1. Universal** – applicable for all human beings regardless of age, gender, race, nationality, caste, creed, occupation/profession etc. They would be the same regardless of time or place i.e., they would have been applicable earlier, would be applicable today and would be applicable in future regardless of whether the person lives in India or abroad, whether the person lives in a city or a village etc.

2. **Rational/logical** - i.e., you should be able to apply logic and reason out for yourself that the principle makes sense.
3. **Verifiable** - there should be some way for you to verify what is being said. You should not have to blindly believe the principles just because it is being said so. This verification can be done on the basis of your innate natural acceptance. As described earlier, natural acceptance is a faculty that is there in each one of us. You can refer to it whenever you want and verify things for yourself.
4. **Leading to harmony** - last but most importantly, the principles should lead to harmony within yourself, harmony in the body and harmony with the environment - everything that you are inter-connected with (other human beings and the rest of nature).

As we saw in the previous section, the human being is a co-existence of Self and body and these are two distinct entities. Therefore, we can study these Universal health principles in two parts -

1. Principles relating to the body
2. Principles relating to the Self and its interaction with the body

Here is a proposal for you to consider about the principles. Let us first list out these principles and then we will study each one of them in more detail:

Principles relating to the body

1. Body is a material unit in nature and thus follows the material laws of nature.
2. Body is a self-organised unit.
3. Body exists in co-existence with the Self
4. Body exists in nature along with other units/entities and interacts with them in a definite manner

Principles relating to the Self and its interaction with the body

1. Self is a unit of consciousness. While the body is gross, the self is subtle.
2. Self is in co-existence with the body and it is the Self that is central to human existence. The body is merely a tool of the Self
3. Self is a self-organised unit
4. The human being (as a coexistence of Self and body) exists with other human beings and also with other units in nature like animals, birds, trees and plants and interacts with them (is inter-connected with them and has a relationship with them).
5. In all interactions, while the body's response is definite (it is fixed and the body does not have a choice in the matter), the Self has the freedom to choose its response. The Self chooses/decides its response based on its acceptances/assumptions which may be a result of knowing (right understanding) or the lack of it. When based on knowing (right understanding), the response is definite but when not founded on knowing, the response/reaction of the Self is indefinite.

Now, let us look at these principles in more detail.

Principles Relating to the Human Body

1. The body is a material unit in nature.

Being a material unit the body follows the material laws of nature:

- It is made up of material substances naturally present in nature e.g., water, air etc.
- Just as all material units are temporary, the body is also a temporary unit.

Consequently, the body grows from seed (ovum or egg) to embryo to new born, to child, to adult, finally ages and eventually dies.

- Being material in nature, the body's needs are also material/physio-chemical (e.g., food.)

- Just as the body is temporary, its needs are also temporary (required from time to time- not in continuity). For instance, the need of the body for food - we can see that the body needs food from time to time, not continuously/all the time - we eat breakfast and when we are full we stop eating and are good for three to four hours after which we feel hungry again and then eat lunch etc. but we never feel the need to keep eating without a break and in fact this is not possible for us to do. One can experiment with this and see for oneself.

2. The body is a self-organised unit

All the parts of the body are organised in an orderly manner i.e., the body is inherently in harmony and is also in harmony with its natural environment, at least to begin with. This is evident from the fact that the vast majority of babies are born healthy (barring a very small percentage of aberrations from the normal).

Examples of the body's self-organisation - harmony in the body—

- **Inbuilt processes of composition** - The body has inbuilt processes of composition the outcome of which are new formations. An example of this is that the body starts from a single cell and grows from this single cell into a huge harmony of trillions of cells working together. The trillions of cells in the body are organised into tissues, organs and organ systems within the body. This is part of the normal self-organisation of the body for which we don't have to do anything other than to provide it food - by the processes of composition, the food we consume is converted by the body into the various different tissues, organs and their parts (we don't have to do this).
- **Inbuilt processes of decomposition** - Just as processes of composition keep taking place in the body, resulting in the formation of something new, processes of decomposition also go on side by side, resulting in the deformation of something. Thus, while new cells are being formed, older ones degenerate and die (deform); this keeps happening in a definite way in all the body cells, tissues, organs and organ systems.

Thus some input (the intake of something), through the processes of composition and decomposition, results in some output e.g.,

Body + Food (input) → Nurtured Body + Waste matter (output) i.e., the input of food, on interacting with saliva, digestive enzymes etc. in the body, goes through the processes of composition and decomposition whereby food is deformed and the various new cells, tissues etc. and waste matter are formed.

These processes of composition and decomposition, resulting in the formation and deformation of various substances, keep going on in a well- defined manner in the body.

While all the body processes keep occurring at the level of the entire body as a whole, formation is more in the initial period (i.e., during infancy and childhood) leading to growth in the body until adulthood.

With time, deformation becomes more than the formation and ageing of the body occurs – this is normal and inevitable, ultimately leading to old age and eventually death of the body. These are all definite processes in the self-organisation of the body. It is the body's own self-organisation – we don't have to do this.

- **Inbuilt processes maintaining harmony** - The various cells and tissues that have been formed are also maintained in good working order (in harmony). The body does this by removing the deformed substances (i.e., waste matter) with the help of in built systems and methods of cleansing and waste removal. Body waste is removed through the lungs (as breath), through the skin (as sweat), with the help of the kidneys (as urine) and from the intestines (as bowel movements).

Evidence of the body maintaining its definite order and harmony is seen in the maintenance of the body's internal environment within a definite range e.g., maintenance of core body temperature, percentage of water in the body, level of oxygen in the body, normal body pH, normal osmolarity in the body, normal blood glucose concentration, normal electrolyte levels in the body etc. **(homeostasis)**

- **In built processes of repair, detoxification and regeneration –**
These processes also keep going on in the body as a part of its self-organisation. These help the body to return to harmony if and when it goes into temporary disharmony (e.g., the rise in body temperature in response to an infection in the body is a normal body process to get rid of the infection).

It grows from a single cell to trillions of cells that are organized into tissues, organs and organ systems and all of these work together, in harmony with one another, for the larger good of the body as a whole

- **In built processes of recognising and fulfilling other units –**
The body recognises and fulfils every other unit in a very definite manner e.g., if we consume spinach, the body recognises it in a definite manner and the body is nurtured; however if we consume a poisonous plant like ‘dhatura’, this too is recognised by the body in a very definite manner –it harms the body. It never happens that the dhatura plant nurtures the body because the body recognises it in a definite manner and also fulfils it in a definite manner that is unchanging (it is always so).

3. The body exists in co-existence with the Self; it has a definite conduct/behaviour

Though it is a separate unit in reality, the body is in co-existence with the Self; it does not exist in isolation. While it may seem like certain activities in the body keep occurring by themselves, without requiring conscious moment to moment instructions by the Self (e.g., breathing, beating of the heart, circulation of the blood, digestion of food etc.), we may be able to see that even these activities that are continuing by virtue of the self-organisation of the body are influenced by the Self (e.g., as mentioned earlier, we can change our breathing pattern at will/ consciously; we can also appreciate that we sometimes cause changes in these patterns unconsciously e.g., when we are excited or anxious, the heart rate of our body increases). Thus, even those activities that are termed “involuntary” do require the consent of the Self (by virtue of its association with the body) to continue.

The body has a definite conduct in existence - it behaves in a definite manner - e.g., as mentioned earlier, once born, the body grows, ages and eventually dies. This behaviour of the body is definite; the body does not have a choice in this matter – it cannot live forever.

Similarly, the body can digest only a limited amount of food. The body cannot choose to digest more than its capacity, even if the food is very tasty. Thus we can see that the body behaves in a definite manner – its conduct is definite.

4. The body exists in nature along with other units/entities and interacts with them in a definite manner i.e., it recognises its relationship with them and fulfils that relationship

The body is surrounded by other entities (like birds, plants, trees, rocks, mud etc.). These entities recognise their relationship with one another and fulfil that relationship, interacting with one another in a definite manner e.g., plants absorb nutrients from the soil in a definite manner; they take only those nutrients that are needed for them to grow and leave the rest in the soil. So also, the body recognises its relationship with other units in nature and fulfils that relationship with them (interacting with them in a definite manner). For example, if you go out when it is hot and sunny outside, the body will get warm/hot when exposed to the sun. The body does not have any choice in this.

In fact this is a very important principle that has tremendous ramifications that we need to understand. The earth we live on is a large material unit in nature. It recognises its relationship with the sun (also a large material unit in nature) and fulfils that relationship in a definite manner. As the earth rotates on its axis, it gets sunlight on various parts of it causing the occurrence of day and night. We can see that this has been happening in a definite manner since centuries. All other units in nature also recognise their relationship with the sun and fulfil that relationship in a definite manner e.g., leaves on trees, bushes and plants tend to ‘open up’ at dawn as they are exposed to sunlight and ‘close up’ or droop at dusk once the daylight starts fading into darkness.

The human body, being a material unit, is no exception: definite changes take place in the body on a daily basis in relation to the rising and setting of the sun and the cycle of day and night (the daily circadian rhythm). One example of this can be seen in the secretion of melatonin (the sleep inducing hormone) in the body. By design, this hormone is secreted by the body at night, making us feel drowsy and sleepy.

Here is another example: have you ever noticed that when you eat a particular type of food in the daytime, your body tends to digest it better than if you eat the same type of food late at night? This is also an example of the definite conduct (definite recognition and fulfilment) of the body in relation to the sun.

Just as there are changes in the body with the earth's rotation on its axis (leading to night and day), changes in the body also take place in response to the rotation of the moon around the earth (the lunar cycle) in a definite manner e.g., the menstrual cycle in women normally recurs once in every 28 days (approximately) i.e., the menstrual cycle occurs in sync with the lunar cycle. Whenever the menstrual cycle is not in sync with the lunar cycle (i.e., not recurring every ~28 days but recurring much before or recurring much later after 28 days), this may indicate ill health in the body.

You may have noticed the connection between the lunar cycle and its impact on water in the ocean - the highest tides are seen every two weeks in association with the new moon and the full moon. Similarly, the lunar cycle also has an impact on the water contained in the body (the human body is made up of 72% water!).

Besides these daily and monthly rhythmic cycles, there are also seasonal cycles in nature. Due to the earth's axis being tilted and the sun's rays falling on different parts of the earth at different times during the year, there is occurrence of different seasons. Seasonal variations also impact the human body and we will explore various examples of this as we go along.

Principles relating to the Self and its interaction with the body

1. Self is a unit of consciousness. While the body is gross, the self is subtle.

Being subtle, we are not able to physically see the Self with the eyes the way we can see the body. However, as we discussed earlier, if we pay a little attention to what is going on within us, we can become aware of the activities of desire, thought and expectation continuously going on within.

2. Self is in co-existence with the body. Self is central to human existence; it uses the body like a tool or instrument

While the Self and body co-exist and there is interaction between the two, this interaction is only in the form of exchange of information – no material transaction takes place. The Self pays attention to the body and with the help of the sense organs in the body, the Self reads the body signals, processes/interprets these signals, comes to some conclusion or decision regarding them and then gives instructions to the body which the body follows. In this manner, it is the Self that chooses or decides what to do and then gets the body to do accordingly, using the body like a tool/instrument.

For example, if your hand accidentally comes in contact with fire, the Self instantly gives instructions to the body to withdraw the hand and, within a flash, the body acts accordingly. In fact, it all happens so fast that it almost seems like a reflex action!

Similarly, when the Self pays attention to hunger signals in the body, it instructs the body to get up and take food and the body does so accordingly. If the Self is paying attention to the body signals when eating, it reads the sensation of fullness once sufficient food has been consumed and instructs the body to stop eating which it does.

However, when the Self does not pay attention to the hunger signals in the body because it is paying attention to something else it considers more important, it does not instruct the body to eat food and still the

body obeys – for instance, when the Self decides to keep a fast and chooses to ignore the hunger signals, the body goes without food for the whole day without any problem!

3. Self is a self-organised unit

We saw that the Self has a need for happiness in continuity and that right understanding and right feeling within the Self are what lead to this happiness (harmony) in the Self. This is a part and parcel of the self-organisation of the Self.

Try and notice this in yourself -

Whenever you have a feeling of relationship within you, do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable within? You will find that you are comfortable within, you are in harmony i.e., you are happy within.

How about when you lack the right feeling in the Self? For instance, when you have a feeling of opposition or anger in you, do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable within? You will find that you become uncomfortable within; you are in conflict within i.e., you are unhappy within.

(whenever we have a feeling that is naturally acceptable to us, we feel happy while whenever we have a feeling that is not naturally acceptable to us, we are unhappy – by design that is how the Self is organised).

4. The human being (as a coexistence of Self and body) is in existence with other human beings and interacts with them (has a relationship with them). Similarly, the human being also exists in nature along with other units – material and consciousness and interacts with them (has a relationship with them).

We can clearly see that we as human beings do have a relationship with other human beings. This is why when we hear of a national or even international calamity anywhere on the earth, we feel sorry for the people who underwent pain and suffering (even though we don't know them, we've never seen them, never heard of them).

Similarly we can also see that we do have a relationship even with plants, trees and shrubs. Plants and trees take in carbon-di-oxide and

release oxygen while we as human beings breathe in oxygen and release carbon-di-oxide. So we don't just have a relationship with plants and trees, we are actually dependent on them for our survival.

- 5. In all interactions with other units in nature, the Self is free to choose its response or course of action. While the body's response is definite (it is fixed and the body does not have a choice in the matter), the response of the Self is decided by the Self.**

The Self chooses/decides its response based on its acceptances, which are definite when founded on knowing (or right understanding) and indefinite when not founded on knowing.

If you choose to eat a plant like spinach, the body interacts with the spinach in a very definite manner – the body digests the spinach and this spinach nurtures the body.

What if you eat a poisonous plant like belladonna (dhatura)?

If you assume that a poisonous plant like belladonna will nurture the body and consume the plant with this assumption, your assumption will not change the response of the body which is fixed - the body will interact with the poisonous plant in a predetermined and definite manner. If you do consume a poisonous plant, whether by choice or by mistake, the body will not be able to digest it and it will result in harm to the body.

So while the Self is free to make choices based on right understanding or assumption, the body does not have a choice in the matter - the body has no choice but to follow the instructions of the Self, even if they cause harm to the body.

When the Self makes choices based on assumptions, its response is indefinite – as the assumption changes, the response may change. It is only when the Self has the right understanding that its response becomes definite. So a Self with understanding will give instructions to the body to consume only those foods that are nurturing for the body and not those that harm the body (the response of the Self is definite when the Self has the right understanding).

We can take another example - the body's capacity to digest food is limited to a fixed amount. Some people may be able to eat and digest more food than others but ultimately, for everyone, there is a maximum amount of food that their body can digest at a time - this is their body's maximum capacity for digesting food. The body does not have the capability to digest more than its capacity. If the Self has the right understanding (knows/ understands this), it will choose to instruct the body to eat only as much food as the body can digest and no more. If, however, the Self lacks the right understanding and assumes that tasty food will give it happiness, it may choose to continue eating more and more of the tasty food beyond what the body can digest, merely because of the likeable taste of the food!

While the Self is free to make this wrong choice of eating more than what the body can digest, the body's response is fixed; it is not free to choose to digest this extra amount of food which therefore harms the body - becomes a source of ill health for the body.

As long as the choices of the Self are based on assumptions, these assumptions may or may not be nurturing for the body; also, whenever the assumption of the Self changes, the choice (response/behaviour) of the Self may change. Choices in the Self become definite (i.e., the conduct of the Self becomes definite) only when the Self has the right understanding. You may be able to see this for yourself.

Test Your Understanding

1. What do you understand by Universal health principles?
2. What are the criteria for Universal health principles?
3. List out the principles relating to the body and the principles relating to the interaction between the Self and the body and give an example of each of the principles.

Chapter 12

Specific Recommendations for Health (Based on the Universal Health Principles)

In the previous chapter we discussed the universal principles of health based on the reality (the way things are). Now let us look at the recommendations for health. These recommendations are derived from the universal health principles and are based on inferences drawn from the universal principles. The recommendations guide you on what to do in order to stay healthy. By following these recommendations, you can be healthy and stay healthy.

While the basic principles are universal and apply to all human beings for all time, the recommendations for health may vary from individual to individual based on the age, gender, body type, place, time etc. because at the level of the body, we all have these differences – while one may be young, the other may be old; one may be male, the other female, we may have different body constitutions etc. Therefore, recommendations may be specific regarding any of these specific differences.

For example, when it comes to a child whose body is actively growing, some of the recommendations for food will take into consideration the specific requirements for active growth (e.g., a larger quantity of protein rich foods that help in the process of the laying down of new tissues and their active growth) while in an adult in whom the body has completed its growth process, the recommendation may be for less quantities of such foods.

Similarly, the recommendations may also be specific for specific times of the day, specific seasons etc. as we will see.

The following is a list of recommendations based on the reality (the basic principles) followed by a more detailed description of these recommendations:

1. Recommendation of Appropriate Intake (based on the principle that the body is a material unit that undergoes change – like all material units)

- As per stage of growth of body (childhood, youth, old age)
 - As per the constitutional type of the body
2. Recommendation of aiding the natural body processes or at least, not disturbing them (based on the principle that the body is a self-organised unit in harmony)
 3. Recommendation of food and activity in accordance with its similarity/dissimilarity to the body (based on the principle of a fixed response of the body to other entities in nature)
 4. Recommendation of healthy routine and lifestyle in sync with cycles of nature (based on the body's response to the day and night cycle, the monthly lunar cycle and the seasons - fixed response to all other entities in nature)
 5. Recommendation of the Self giving the right instructions to the body (based on the principle that the self is central; the body is an instrument)
 6. Recommendation of ensuring the right feeling within the Self rather than seeking it from outside (based on the principle that by virtue of the Self being self-organised, it has a need for happiness and this need is fulfilled by right understanding and right feeling within the Self)
 7. Recommendation of right feeling in the Self vis-à-vis the body (the feeling of self-regulation).
 8. Recommendation of right feeling in the Self vis-à-vis other human beings and the rest of nature (based on the principle that the human being co-exists with other human beings and the rest of nature and is interconnected with them).
 9. Recommendation of making the right choices - based on right understanding and awareness in the Self (not on the basis of assumptions in the absence of understanding)

The above is a listing of various recommendations for health. Now let us look at the details of these recommendations.

Recommendations for Health (Details)

1. Recommendation of Appropriate Intake

- As per stage of growth
- As per body type

(Principle – The body is a material unit in nature).

Being material in nature, the body is a physio-chemical entity made up of fundamental attributes that are present in nature (the presence of two of these - water and air, can readily be appreciated in the human body).

Being a physio-chemical entity, the body's needs are also physio-chemical (e.g., food) and thus the body is a result of its accumulated intake or, in other words, the food consumed by it. If the food consumed is nurturing for the body, it helps the body to grow, become healthy and strong but if the food consumed is not nurturing for the body it may weaken the body and lead to ill-health.

So balanced meals of nutritious and nurturing foods (like fruit, vegetables, grain etc., keep the body strong and healthy while foods that are not nurturing for the body (like fried and sugary or processed foods) weaken the body making it an easy prey to colds, coughs and other more serious ailments.

Recommendations for Intake as per the stage of growth

Being a material unit the body, like all material things, is temporary - it grows from seed form (ovum or egg) to infant, child, teenager, adult and then becomes older, ages and eventually dies. The activities and processes going on in the body are also specific for specific age groups:

Childhood is a period predominantly of formation and growth in the body

Adulthood is a period predominantly of preservation and maintenance of the body

Old age is a period predominantly of degenerative processes in the body. Recommendations for intake, therefore, are also specific for specific age groups as given below.

Childhood - (period of growth)

The period of growth is from infancy till one becomes an adult. During this period of growth new tissues are being formed and laid down in the body and this requires large amounts of foods rich in protein. Hence the diet in the growing age can include larger quantities of protein rich foods (like milk and milk products, dals/lentils etc.).

Adulthood (period of maintenance)

Once the body has grown to the adult size, it is no longer actively growing and now requires intake of food largely for the activities of sustenance/maintenance i.e., it may not require very large quantities of food, nor too much of food with a high protein content (unless the adult is engaged in heavy physical or manual labour). Therefore, in an adult with a sedentary lifestyle, the quantity of food intake can be moderate and protein rich foods in the diet can be reduced.

Exceptions to this are the states of pregnancy and lactation and also the teenage years - these are periods when there is occurrence of rapid growth. Adults who do manual labour may also be exceptions - whenever they are doing a lot of manual work, they can consume larger quantities of food and larger quantities of protein rich food (for the building of muscle).

Elderly (period predominantly of degeneration)

As age advances and the body becomes old, certain changes take place in the body which are expected and normal e.g., a lowering/slowing down of body metabolism. Due to this and due to the decrease in physical activity with advancing age, the body now requires even less food than it did in the adult stage. Thus, with advancing age, food can

be consumed less frequently and in smaller portions (even nourishing foods like grains in the diet can be reduced).

The slowing down of metabolism and of physical activity also slows down movement in the intestines – this means that waste matter now moves more sluggishly down the intestinal pathway. To prevent this waste matter from accumulating in the body in the form of toxins, more of cleansing (fibre rich) foods can be included in the diet e.g., fruits and vegetables.

Recommendation of intake as per body type

In the previous section, we had discussed about the constitution of the body and the different body types:

The A type (ectomorph/air-space/'vata' body type) has predominance of energy of movement

The B type (mesomorph/fire-water/'pitta' body type) has predominance of energy of digestion and metabolism and

The C type (endomorph/earth-water/'kapha' body type) has predominance of energy of formation of the body's structure

Since the different body types have specific characteristics, the recommendation for the intake of food may be modified to suit the specific characteristics of the particular body type. For instance, the air-space body type is usually lean and often has problems associated with dryness (a characteristic of the air attribute). In the digestive system, this often translates to a tendency towards constipation. Therefore, for a person with this body type, fibre rich foods e.g., vegetables and fruit that is fleshy (like fresh figs, papaya etc.) would be suitable.

Similarly, orange juice may be very beneficial for a person with an earth-water ('kapha) body type but the same orange juice may be extremely unsuitable (may cause acidity and heartburn) in a person with a fire-water ('pitta') body type with excessive heat in the body (a characteristic of the attribute of fire)...

Another important thing to note is that just as there are different body types, the different attribute combinations of these body types are characteristically seen to be prominent at particular ages, as follows:

Childhood – Predominance of earth-water ('kapha') combination (hence children tend to be chubby)

Youth and adulthood - Predominance of fire-water ('pitta') combination (considered the most 'fiery' phase of life; we tend to feel more hot during adulthood)

Old age - Predominance of air-space ("vata") combination of attributes (the elderly generally feel excessively cold and are riddled with anxiety and worry)

A difference in predominance of the different combinations of attributes can also be seen at the various different times of day. We will discuss the significance of this when we get to the daily routine a little further on.

2. Recommendation of aiding the natural body processes (or at least not disturbing them) (Principle – The body is a self-organised unit in harmony)

We saw how the body is an orderly system to begin with (evident from the fact that most babies are born healthy). If we study the various organs and organ systems in the body, we find that all these organs and organ systems work together in perfect harmony with one another – the heart, lungs, digestive system, nervous system, endocrine system (hormones) – all work in harmony with one another for the larger good of the body as a whole. Every system plays its part; no system tries to compete or interfere with the working of the other.

As mentioned in the last chapter, some of the processes that go on in the body as a part of its self-organisation and for which we don't need to do anything much are:

The processes of composition - leading to formation (growth)

Just to recap, it was mentioned that the processes of composition lead to the formation of various cells and tissues in the body. Isn't it a wonder

that the food we consume gets converted into the cells of the various tissues and organs of the body without our having to do anything for this? We need do nothing and yet, food gets converted into muscle tissue; the heart muscle pumps blood day in and day out, the lungs expand and contract with every breath we take.....

How can you aid these processes of growth in the body? While the body is growing in a self-organised manner, you (i.e., the Self) can help/support the growth processes in the body by eating food that is nurturing for the body so that the body grows to its full potential and becomes strong and healthy rather than to eat junk food that would stunt the growth, weaken the body and ultimately lead to its ill-health.

The processes of decomposition – leading to deformation

We had spoken of the processes of decomposition going on side by side along with the processes of composition. While the processes of composition lead to the formation of a nurtured body, an outcome of the processes of decomposition is waste matter resulting from the deformation of various substances.

When you understand this process, you see that you can help support it by paying attention to the kind of food you are eating. With certain foods, the waste matter readily leaves the body while with others, it may stick to the intestinal walls and its toxins may keep circulating in the body for long periods of time. You can try this out for yourself and see – eat a lot of fruit and vegetables one day and notice how easily you are able to clear the bowels the next day. Now eat white bread, potato chips and other foods lacking fibre and note what happens the next day – you may notice that you now have greater difficulty in clearing your bowels. Hence the recommendation for eating foods that are rich in fibre – e.g., fruit and vegetables, whole grains etc. (as opposed to more processed foods).

The processes maintaining harmony

We spoke of the body's remarkable ability to maintain its internal environment within a definite suitable range. This maintenance of the

internal environment in a state of equilibrium or balance or steady state is referred to as 'homeostasis'. Thus, the body is able to maintain the temperature, the acid-base balance, the blood circulation in the various organs etc. without our having to give it specific instructions moment to moment.

How can you support the body's processes that maintain its homeostasis? Here is an example - when one body part is busy with a particular activity, you can help it to maintain that activity smoothly and efficiently by giving rest to other body parts at that time. This is why, if you are doing a lot of vigorous physical activity, it is recommended that you do so before rather than after a heavy meal. When you eat a large meal, the body has to digest all the food you've eaten and for this activity of digesting food, a larger portion of the blood circulating in the body is directed towards the stomach and intestines. At this time, if you do vigorous activity, the body will need to direct a large part of the circulating blood to the skeletal muscles, in order for the activity to take place efficiently. However, the amount of blood circulating in the body is limited. Therefore, in such a situation, the body will not be able to cope with maintaining the activity of digestion and the activity of physical work properly (in addition to maintaining adequate blood circulation to the vital organs which function all the time –like the heart). So, by choosing your activities with understanding, you can aid the body and help it to function smoothly and efficiently.

For a similar reason, it is recommended to bathe before rather than after a meal.

The processes of cleansing

The body also possesses the ability to remove unwanted, waste and toxic matter from itself in the form of sweat, urine, stool etc. While many of the cleansing processes keep occurring throughout the day, some are naturally designed to take place primarily in the early morning hours (e.g., the evacuation of the bowels in the morning). This early morning bowel cleansing process is facilitated by the spontaneous increase in

intestinal blood circulation in the body in the early morning hours soon after you wake up. You don't have to give the body specific instructions to increase this flow of blood to the intestines. This is all happening as a part of the body's own self-organisation.

You (the self) can aid your body in the process of evacuating the bowels (or at least not hamper the process) by rising early and going to the toilet early in the morning. Hence the recommendation to wake up early and go to the toilet soon after waking up. We will discuss this in more detail in the section on daily routine.

Similarly, you can aid the body's process of cleansing through sweat by wearing cotton clothes (cotton cloth is porous, allowing the sweat formed on the skin to evaporate) instead of wearing synthetic non-porous ones.

It is also recommended that the natural urges in the body (like sneezing, yawning, urge to have a bowel movement, urge for urination etc.) not be suppressed. When you suppress these and other similar urges, you are preventing the body from trying to cleanse itself. When cleansing does not take place properly, the body's normal state of harmony is disrupted, leading to disharmony (ill-health) which may be temporary to begin with but, if left uncorrected, may become a permanent and non-correctable disharmony. But more on that later.

The processes of repair and regeneration

These are processes in the body that keep correcting minor disharmony in the body that may occur from time to time and bring the body back into harmony. While these processes too are ongoing on a regular basis, many take place at night when you sleep. These too are inherently a part of the body's self-organisation for which no specific moment to moment instructions are necessary - in fact you are sleeping peacefully when the body is busy taking care of all this.

Here too, you (the Self) can aid the body's inherent capacity for repair and regeneration and its return to harmony by going to bed early at night so that the repair processes can be carried out by the body

undisturbed while you sleep. On the other hand, if you remain awake till late at night, the body may not be able to carry out the processes of repair and regeneration with efficiency and this may lead to disharmony (ill-health) in the body (besides the fact that the late night is likely to lead to your waking up late and thereby disrupting the body's process of cleansing - especially the early morning bowel evacuation).

The processes of recognising and fulfilling other units

As a part of its self-organisation, the body recognises its relationship with other units and fulfils this relationship in a definite manner. We spoke of the body recognising the food we take in and fulfilling that relationship in a definite manner (the body gets nurtured by our intake of food); similarly, the body recognises its relationship with other units too.

For example, there are many viruses and bacteria that may enter and leave the body – some of these may be nurturing for the body while others may be harmful. The body is able to recognise the various types of viruses and bacteria and fulfil its relationship with them in a definite manner. Those viruses and bacteria that it recognises as being nurturing for the body, it 'allows' them to co-exist along with the various cells and tissues of the body (definite fulfilment). On the other hand, those viruses and bacteria that the body recognises as being harmful for the body, the body responds to them by raising the body temperature (fever), directing the white cells of the body to the site where the viruses or bacteria are and attempting to get rid of them and bringing the body back into harmony (definite fulfilment). All this definite recognition and fulfilment is by virtue of the body's own self-organisation. You don't have to do anything for it.

Thus, in the face of infection, fever is a natural body process by which the body attempts to get rid of the infection and bring itself back into harmony. All this is being done by the body. How can you aid or support this process? You can aid this process by eating light, resting and taking plenty of liquids so that the body can work on its task of clearing the

infection more efficiently and come back to harmony rapidly.

When you don't understand this and you panic or jump to quickly taking fever suppressing medication (even when the fever may not be too high), it merely suppresses the symptom of fever but does nothing to help get rid of the infection – it may, in fact, hinder the body's response to the infection (as mentioned earlier, at a higher than normal temperature, the body's white blood cells are able to travel to the site of infection faster and get rid of the infection more efficiently!). The same is often true for other symptoms of disharmony like cough, skin rashes/pigmentation on the skin and nails, vomiting, loose motions etc. as we will see when we go further along.

Thus the body takes care of these processes of composition and decomposition, of maintaining harmony (homeostasis), of repair and regeneration and recognises and fulfils its relationship with all units in a definite manner without a whole lot of active participation from your side. The recommendation regarding your role in this is that you help support these processes (or at least not disturb them).

In this manner, as we understand the underlying principles governing the body and follow the recommendations based on the principles, we can see our participation (role) in keeping the body healthy.

Now let us take a look at the next recommendation.

3. Recommendation of food and activity in accordance with its similarity/dissimilarity to the body (Principle - Body exists in nature along with other units/entities and interacts with them in a definite manner. This is because the body's response is fixed – it recognises its relationship with every other unit and fulfils that relationship).

In the previous recommendation, we saw how the body recognises its relationship with the food that we take in and fulfils this relationship in a definite manner. We also saw how the recognition and fulfilment of the body with other units in nature occurs in a definite manner.

Stemming from this is the recommendation of consuming foods in accordance with their similarity/ dissimilarity to the body. What does this mean? Foods with specific qualities enhance similar qualities or properties in the body. Thus the body 'recognises' food that is light in nature and 'fulfils' that relationship in a definite manner (promoting lightness in the body - making the body feel light); for example, note how you find the body to be after you eat light vegetable soup - does the body feel light or heavy? You may find that the body feels light after such a meal.

On the other hand, food that is heavy in nature causes heaviness in the body (the body 'recognises' its relationship with the heavy food and 'fulfils' that relationship in a definite manner). Note how you find the body after you eat a heavy meal of fried parathas or puris, perhaps with a heavy (greasy) vegetable curry. Does the body now feel light or heavy? You may notice that after eating these heavy foods that are difficult for the body to digest, the body, in fact, seems more sluggish, dull and lethargic. You can try it out and experientially validate this for yourself.

Now, if you have a constitutionally dry body type (the 'A' type or 'Air-Space' or 'Vata' type), you may be able to notice that when you eat foods that are dry i.e., similar to your body constitution (e.g., roti or bread) they enhance the dryness in your body (the body tends to become more dry) but when you eat foods that are fleshy in nature (e.g., bananas, mangoes, fresh figs etc.) the dryness in your body seems to lessen.

Foods with specific properties may also decrease the opposite or dissimilar qualities or properties in the body. Hence foods that are heating in nature reduce coldness in the body while foods that are cooling in nature reduce heat in the body. This is why we tend to have hot soups in the winters and salads with cucumbers etc. in the summers.

Thus, we will be able to see that when we consume specific foods that are similar to the body tissues (e.g., A2 milk - very similar in constitution to the fluids in the human body) and use them judiciously, the body is nurtured. Note that the milk being referred to here is A2 milk and not A1 (discussed in detail in the section on Intake). Also, when we avoid foods

that are very dissimilar to the body tissues (e.g., carbonated drinks, beverages like tea, coffee etc.) we prevent the harm these beverages can cause to the body. In this manner, we can help in the body's endeavours to maintain its normal state of equilibrium – by consuming what is nurturing for the body and avoiding what is harmful. Contrary to this, when we use all sorts of foods non-judiciously (without understanding), they may cause harm to the body. We will discuss more about various foods and their qualities in the section on 'Intake'.

4. Recommendation of healthy routine and lifestyle in synchronisation with the cycles of nature (based on the body's response to the day – night cycle, the monthly lunar cycle and the annual rhythmic pattern of the seasons)

(Principle – The body exists in nature along with other entities and interacts with them in a definite manner i.e., it recognises its relationship with them and fulfils that relationship).

Just as the body recognises its relationship with other units once they have entered it (whether it be the food we take in or viruses or bacteria that enter the body) and it fulfils that relationship, similarly, the body also recognises its relationship with all other units in its environment and fulfils its relationship with all these units in a definite manner. Hence, the body responds to the daily, monthly and annual (seasonal) cycles in a very definite manner. When we understand this, we realise that our lifestyle (daily routine, diet and activity) needs to be in sync with the natural cycles in order for the body to stay healthy.

Daily routine – Just as the leaves on plants and trees 'open' up as the sun comes up and 'close' at dusk, so also the human body undergoes various changes. These changes result from the body recognizing its relationship with the sun (and therefore with the day-night cycle in nature) and fulfilling that relationship. Thus, several cleansing processes take place in the body in the morning; the body's digestion also works in a cyclic manner, being most efficient at the time of peak heat at mid-day and least efficient after sundown; at night when it is time to go to sleep, the body secretes melatonin, the sleep hormone which helps you feel sleepy.

When you understand this, you are able to see the significance of early rising (preferably between 4-6am as we will discuss later in sections to come) – one benefit of this is the timely cleansing of bowels; now you may also see the significance of eating a light breakfast (the body's digestive fire is just starting to build up and the body is also busy with cleansing processes at this time), eating a hearty meal for lunch (when your digestive fire is at its peak and the food you eat can readily be digested by the body), and having a very light dinner early (rather than late) in the evening – light because the digestion is less efficient once the sun goes down and early so that there is sufficient time for food to be digested before it is time to go to bed. Such a routine would be suitable and most in sync with the day-night cycle.

You may also be able to appreciate the importance of turning off all lights and going to bed early at night (by ~10pm). This includes turning off laptops, mobile 'phones etc. as the bright lights in these interfere with the secretion of melatonin in the body. Interference in melatonin secretion interferes with your sleep-wake cycle resulting in disharmony (ill health) in the body because it is at night, when you sleep, that the body is busy with the processes of repair and rejuvenation. This is the reason why you feel fresh and rested after a good night's sleep but are tired and sluggish the next day after a late night.

So, at the very least, you can support the body's efforts at being in harmony by making a routine habit of going to bed early, waking up early, eating the right foods at the right time and exercising the body, so that the body can function at its best.

When it comes to the different seasons of the year, you can plan your activities in accordance with the season e.g., in the summer when the days are hot and humid, you may want to refrain from outdoor activity during the hours of peak heat and be more active preferably in the early am or in the early evening hours, say about 4 or 5 pm.

Similarly you can also plan on the clothes to wear based on the season. Loose fitting clothes made from natural fibre like cotton are porous, allowing free air exchange between the body and the outside

environment, allowing efficient evaporation of body sweat in the summer and helping to keep the body cool and the skin healthy. On the other hand, synthetic clothes that are non-porous do not allow free exchange of air through the skin. This prevents the sweat from evaporating and often leads to skin rashes and problems like eczema.

When it comes to the selection of food for the different seasons, it makes sense to consume fruit and vegetables that are fresh, regional and seasonal. Seasonal grains too are the best bet - like pearl millet ('bajra') in the winter (this millet is heating for the body) and grains like finger millet ('ragi'), barley etc. in the summer (as these are cooling for the body).

5. Recommendation of Self giving the right instructions to the body. (Principle - The Self is central to human existence. It uses the body like a tool/instrument).

Who decides what you eat, when you eat, how much you eat, when to stop eating etc.? In fact who decides each and every activity you do? You do. If you recall, we discussed that everything you do in the outside world happens first in the inside world (as feelings, thoughts and expectations) before it is finally expressed outside in the form of behavior/action.

It is (you) the Self that makes all the choices and decisions and then instructs the body to do accordingly. Once you make your choice and give instructions to the body, the body follows. As mentioned earlier, if you instruct the body to consume foods that are nurturing for the body this will result in good health in the body but if you instruct the body to consume foods that are merely tasty but are not nurturing for the body (e.g., junk food), the body will do so and this will result in ill health in the body.

So what needs to be done is to become aware of the transaction of information taking place between yourself and the body - to read the signals in the body (on waking up, at meal times...in fact in every interaction with the body), interpret them correctly, make the right choices and give instructions to the body accordingly.

6. Recommendation of ensuring the right feeling within the Self.

(Principle – The Self is self-organized; it has a need for happiness and this need is fulfilled by right understanding and right feeling within the Self).

Earlier we had talked about the faculty of natural acceptance in you (the Self), as in every Self. You may also have been able to see that you have imagination (desire, thought and expectation) going on within you continuously. Whenever the desire (feeling) in yourself is in line with the natural acceptance, there is harmony within i.e., you feel happy at that moment. This is by virtue of your own self-organisation.

Therefore, it follows that when all your desires (feelings) are in line with the natural acceptance, your need for happiness will be completely fulfilled from within yourself – this is referred to as a healthy Self (a Self with the right understanding). A healthy Self (being fulfilled and happy) does not seek happiness from outside.

On the other hand, when you lack the right understanding and have a desire (feeling) that is not in line with the natural acceptance, at that moment there is disharmony in you – this is referred to as an unhealthy Self (a Self that lacks understanding). A disharmonious or unhealthy Self is largely unaware and, lacking the right understanding about the reality, assumes itself to be the body. Being unfulfilled and unhappy, it seeks happiness from outside – through the body.

Check if this may be happening with you. Do you seek pleasure/ excitement through the five senses of the body – e.g., are you looking for tasty food to make you happy, or perhaps seeking to hear good music in search for happiness etc.?

Since your need (the need of the Self) for happiness is continuous, you may keep trying to fulfill this need through the body but can it work? You will find that it will be in vain - such attempts merely resulting in a short-lived excitement or temporary happiness. We discussed this when we were talking about happiness. If you didn't try out the experiment on eating the sweet, you can go back to that section and try it out now

- eat a piece of sweet (or salty) food that you like. Do you feel happy?
Observe - how long does this happiness last?

You will find that this 'happiness' is momentary and it is unable to fulfill your need for continuous happiness. As long as you remain unfulfilled and unhappy within, you will continue to seek happiness from outside, through the body's sense organs (e.g., trying to derive happiness by eating i.e., through the sensation of taste, listening to 'good' music i.e., through the sensation of hearing etc.).

In seeking happiness from outside, whenever the object of your indulgence is available to you (tasty food, music etc.) you may indulge in it (though it still does not satisfy you for too long) but if and when the object of indulgence is not available, then what? Then the absence of the object itself becomes a cause for your unhappiness! Try to see if this rings true for you or not.

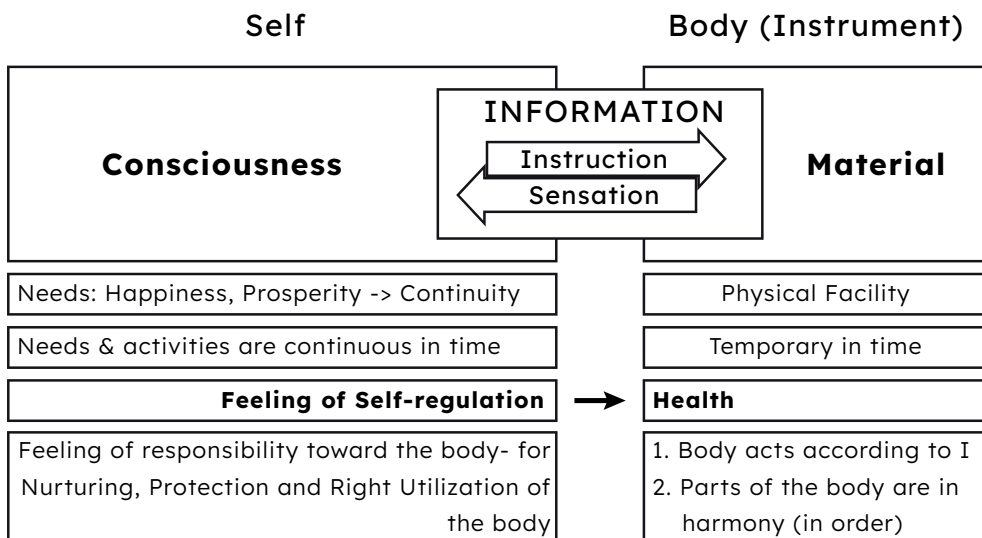
This is when we start looking for escape routes for running away from the unhappiness - some of us may sleep excessively, others may try and drown their unhappiness through other avenues (e.g., through alcohol, tobacco, drugs etc.). This may soon become a habit leading to various addictions (to food - binge eating, to alcohol, drugs etc.)

So what to do so as not to fall into this trap? What is the solution? The solution is to follow the recommendation of ensuring the right feeling within yourself (feeling that is in line with your natural acceptance). Whenever you have the right feeling within yourself you feel happy and when you are happy within, you stop searching for happiness outside, through the five senses, through the body, through objects, through seeking the right feeling from other human beings. The health of the body is a natural outcome of this.

7. Recommendation of ensuring the right feeling in the Self vis-à-vis the Body (the feeling of self- regulation).

(The Self with right understanding has the right feeling towards the body i.e., a feeling of self-regulation)

A Self with right understanding ensures the right feeling within. This is a healthy Self. As a part of the right feeling in the Self is its right feeling towards the body. When the Self has the right feeling towards the body (i.e., the feeling of self-regulation), it takes responsibility for nurturing, protecting and rightly utilising the body. This leads to harmony and health in the body. Let us see how this comes about.



Health in the Body is a Natural Consequence of the Feeling of Self-regulation in the Self and Implementaion of a Program for Self-regulation

Figure - 12.1

Nurturing the body – A healthy Self, understands the purpose of food - that food is meant to nurture the body and therefore consumes only those foods that are nurturing or nourishing for the body regardless of taste and consumes them only in the required quantity - not more than that. Being fulfilled from within, a healthy Self does not seek happiness from outside.

An unhealthy Self that does not have the right understanding, may select/ choose food giving priority to the sensation of taste or even keeping taste as the only criterion, regardless of whether the food is nutritious

for the body or not (e.g., fried, processed and highly spicy foods with chemical additives to enhance taste). The unhealthy Self may also eat such foods in larger than required quantities leading to obesity and the various consequent health problems associated with it. And since this consumed food is neither nourishing for the body, nor digestible by the body, it acts almost like a slow poison for the body. Check whether you are eating food to nurture the body or largely for taste?

Protecting the body – It is the Self that protects the body with the help of clothes, shoes, shelter (home). A healthy Self understands that the purpose of clothes is to protect the body. With this understanding, the selection of clothes is made keeping the needs of the body in mind (choosing clothes that are most suitable for the body).

For instance, if you understand that the body has a need to get rid of waste matter and one of the ways of getting rid of this waste is through the skin, in the form of sweat then you will choose clothes that allow this to happen. To aid this process, you may choose to wear loose fitting clothes made of a natural fibre like cotton. This allows free air exchange helping in the evaporation of sweat – once the sweat evaporates, the body is rid of the waste through the skin and cools down, coming back to harmony.

However if you (the Self) lack this understanding, you may choose to wear tight fitting clothes made of a synthetic fibre perhaps because you like the ‘look’ (appearance) of the clothes, not being mindful of the fact that such clothes are likely to prevent free air exchange and hence prevent the efficient evaporation of sweat from the body. This may further lead to skin rashes and eczema. Check for yourself – on what basis do you decide/ choose the clothes you wear – what is practical and suits the purpose or what is in fashion or ‘looks good’?

Similarly, when you make or select a home (shelter to protect the body), check whether you do so keeping the needs of the body in mind or not? For instance, do you construct a house with ample windows and ventilators in the house for the free passage of outside air? This ensures good cross ventilation in the house, bringing the body in contact with

the outside air in a controlled manner, gently acclimatising the body to the external environment, making it hardy and strong and helping it to become immune to infections.

If you lack the understanding that the purpose of a house is to shelter and protect the body, you may choose to construct a house that looks nice i.e., has an appealing appearance but it may not be clear whether the house would be helpful in protecting the body properly or not. So, in the above example for instance, you may choose to build a house of a design that merely looks good to you or one that is ‘trending’ without paying attention to ventilation. Such a house may have no ventilators or have very few windows. Then when you actually go to live in such a house with a closed environment (without proper ventilation) you may find it uncomfortable or suffocating and resort to purchasing and installing an air conditioner to artificially maintain a comfortable temperature in the house.

Now, not only will you be dependent on an air conditioner for being comfortable but also, you will be subjecting the body to frequent differences in temperature – a much lower temperature when you are in the house and a higher temperature when you go out of the house! Such frequent fluctuations of temperature will eventually lead to disharmony/ill-health in the body.

Rightly utilising the body – A healthy Self understands that the purpose of a healthy body is to serve the purpose of the Self. And what is the purpose of the Self? You can ask yourself this question. You may be able to see that you (the Self) are constantly seeking happiness. Check if there is any moment in the day when you seek to be unhappy and you realise that not even for one moment do you want to be unhappy; in other words, you want happiness in continuity. And how do you achieve this happiness in continuity?

For this you need to understand the harmony within yourself, the harmony in the body and the harmony at every level in which you live (in your relationships in the family, in the society and in nature and existence). It is only when a human being is able to live in relationship

and harmony and co-exist with everything in his environment – it is only then that he feels truly fulfilled and happy. Till we have completeness of right understanding, we can reflect on this proposal and try to verify it for ourselves. Refer to your natural acceptance and see – do you want to have a feeling of relationship towards all? At this time you may not have the ability to have a feeling of relationship towards all but is this something desirable? You can reflect on this and see what answer you get.

When one doesn't understand the purpose, one may work very hard, make a lot of effort and achieve a healthy body but then may end up not rightly utilising this healthy body. A question to ask yourself is – How often am I using this body rightly (for its purpose) and how often am I using the body merely to gain pleasure through it (e.g., by eating tasty food)?

We will dwell a little more on our purpose in the last section of the book.

8. Recommendation of Right feeling in the Self – vis-à-vis other human beings and the rest-of-nature

(Principle – The Human being co-exists with other human beings and the rest of nature and is interconnected with all of them).

As a human being, is your existence separate from every other human being and one of isolation or are you interconnected with and interdependent on other human beings? We reflected on this briefly in the last chapter but let us now try to see this for ourselves. You are a part of a family. Have your family members had any role to play in what you see yourself as today? Perhaps your mother made countless meals for you over the years and tried to ensure good nutrition for you; perhaps your father made sure he sent you to a good school so that you could get educated.

What about others not belonging to your family? You may be able to see that many people may have directly or indirectly contributed to your being the person you are today – the milkman delivering milk to your house, the helper who helped cook food or clean your house, the number

of people who contributed to making the house you live in till today, the farmer who grows vegetables –were it not for the farmers in the world, what would we have eaten? So you may be able to see that you are not isolated but rather, you depend on many people –within your immediate family, in your extended family, among your friends and even in the society at large.

Now, how about plants, trees, birds, animals? You can see that the food you eat comes from plants and trees; when it comes to animals, an example is the cow that provided you with milk in your growing years and were it not for the cross-pollination that takes place with the help of bees, birds etc., the ecological balance that supports your very existence may not have been there! As was mentioned in the last chapter, the very survival of the human being thus depends on so many other human beings and on so many units in nature. It is no wonder then that we have a natural acceptance for a feeling of relationship towards all of these (you can refer to your natural acceptance right now and check if this is true for you or not).

When you do have the feeling of relationship towards all these units, how do you feel? When do you feel comfortable – when you see your relationship with all other units in existence or when you see yourself as being isolated from everyone and everything else? You may be able to note that when you (the Self) are able to see your relationship with all and you have the right feeling (i.e., feeling of relationship) towards all, you feel fulfilled; the feeling within you is then in line with the natural acceptance and hence you are in harmony, you are comfortable within; you are happy.

And when do you give the right instructions to the body - when you are comfortable within or when you are disturbed? You will notice that you are able to give the right instructions to the body (instructions that keep the body in its normal state of harmony/health) only when you are comfortable within. Thus having the right feeling within yourself towards other human beings and the rest of nature is a requirement even for keeping the body healthy. You can explore this proposal within yourself - reflect on it and try to see if it holds good for you.

Interestingly, when you have the right feeling towards the rest of nature, you make an effort to enrich and fulfill nature also – you help to enrich the air, water and soil and are fulfilling for animals, birds etc. The enriched pure air, water and soil in turn further help in maintaining the health of your body.

On the other hand, if you assume that you are isolated from everyone and everything else and you do not see your relationship with everything around you, what is the feeling you will have towards them? When you do not see your relationship with others, you will find that you have a feeling of opposition towards them. In this state, how are you likely to feel within yourself? When you refer to your natural acceptance, you can see that you want to have a feeling of relationship for all but in day to day living, you may sometimes have a feeling of relationship and sometimes one of opposition towards others. Whenever you have a feeling of opposition, this feeling of opposition is not naturally acceptable to you so there is conflict within you; you are uncomfortable and disturbed; you are in disharmony within. Try to observe this within yourself.

And when you are in a state of disharmony, you are unable to give the right instructions to the body. This leads to disturbance and disharmony in the body also. The next time you have a feeling of opposition and are getting angry, note the disharmony you cause in the body (you may notice that your heart seems to be beating uncomfortably fast, your breath pattern becomes irregular, you have tremors in your hands i.e., your hands shake uncontrollably). You may even have an uncomfortable sensation in the abdomen and disturbed digestion. All of these are signs of disharmony in the body which have resulted from a disharmony within you (the Self) and ultimately these may lead to long standing ill-health in the body.

Further, when you do not see your relationship with the rest of nature, you lack the right feeling for nature and hence may end up exploiting and polluting the air, water and soil. This in turn causes more harm to the body, resulting in further ill-health.

9. Recommendation of making the right choices (with understanding and awareness)

(Principle - While the body's response is definite, it is fixed and the body has no choice in the matter, the Self has the freedom to choose its response. The Self decides its response based on its acceptances/assumptions which may be a result of knowing i.e., right understanding, or the lack of it). When based on knowing/right understanding, the response is definite but when not founded on knowing, the response/reaction of the Self is indefinite.

When you (the Self) rightly understand the human being, you realize that it is you (the Self) who is central to your existence as a human being. You (the Self) are the one who is making all the choices and decisions and then giving instructions to the body. If you pay a little attention, you will be able to see that you are constantly making all sorts of choices - every moment! You may also be able to see that you are using the body like a tool or instrument. The body merely follows the instructions that you give to it and it is not free to make choices of its own. You, of course, are free to make the choices that you keep making (every moment) and this has a direct impact on the health of the body.

So if you lack understanding and instruct the body to do something that may even cause damage to it, the body will still go ahead and follow your instruction. For instance, if you assume that a certain type of mushroom (a species of fungi) growing in the wild is good for the body and you instruct the body to put it in the mouth, chew and swallow it, the body will do just that (even if the mushroom in question is poisonous and may cause the body to perish!).

On the other hand, if you make choices based on understanding and awareness of the reality (rather than on assumptions that you believe to be true without verifying) you make choices that are right for you, right for the body, right for other human beings as well as right for nature and give instructions to the body accordingly (in other words, you make choices that lead to the well-being of all).

With understanding you will be able to see that when you have the right feeling within you, you feel happy. So you can choose to have the right feeling at any moment.

As a part of this right feeling, you also have the feeling of self-regulation towards the body. With this feeling of self-regulation, you take responsibility for the body - to nurture, protect and rightly utilize the body. Seeing that the purpose of food is to nurture the body, you choose to instruct the body to eat those foods that are nurturing for the body and you choose to instruct the body to eat only as much as is required for nurturing the body (and not more).

Thus, a large number of diseases are psychosomatic in nature

e.g. Over eating, consumption of “junk food” etc. for happiness - causing obesity and ill health

The lack of feeling(resulting in unhappiness) causes physical symptoms

The environment (family, society, nature...) is exploited / is not a major concern

Similarly, with the right understanding, you understand that you are inter-connected with other human beings and the rest of nature and that you have a relationship with all the units in nature. Therefore you choose to live with a feeling of relationship – with other human beings and also with nature. You work with nature for mutual fulfillment and mutual prosperity, choosing to take only what you need from nature and not more. At the same time, you ensure the prosperity in nature. So if you grow crops, for example, you may choose to use methods that are natural or organic, employing cyclic processes that enrich the soil so that not only do you benefit from nature but at the same time, you also help to enrich nature with the process.

Thus you can see how, when one has the right understanding, one makes choices that, directly or indirectly, lead to the well-being of all.

Some Implications of Perceiving/Assuming Human Being = Body

Happiness is sought through

- sensation (through the body)
- getting the right feeling (like respect...) from the other

As a result

- The body is harmed due to excessive consumption or over indulgence to get favourable sensation
- Continuity of happiness can not be ensured
- There is a major impact on family, society, nature.....

Test Your Understanding

1. What do you understand by the specific recommendations for health?
2. How are the recommendations for health different from the health principles?
3. Make a list of one or two specific recommendations based on each of the health principles.

Part IV

Practices and Processes for Ensuring Health in the Body - I

Practices And Processes For Ensuring Health in the Body - I

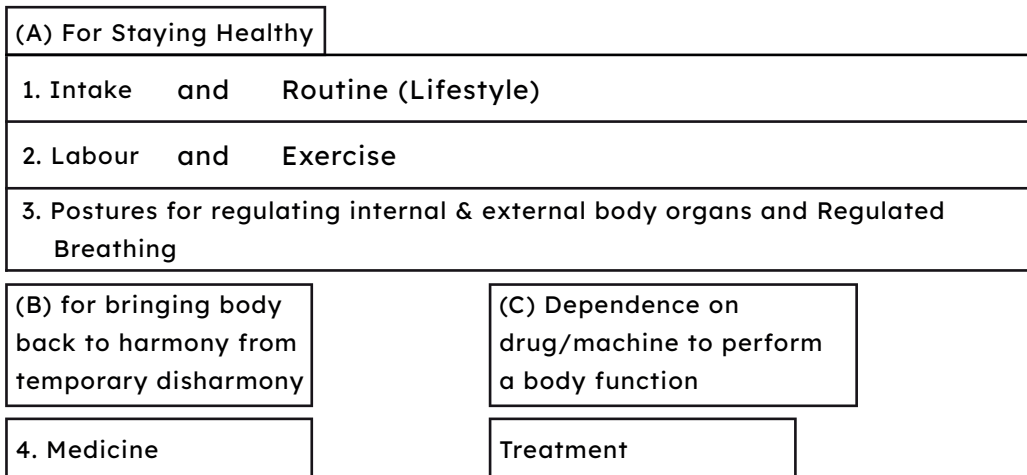
We started with an introduction to holistic human health and what it means and then tried to understand the human being and saw that the human being is a co-existence of Self and Body. We then moved on to try and understand health in the Self and saw how a Self with the right understanding (a healthy Self) is in harmony and takes responsibility for the body and then in the previous section, we looked at the principles of health which are universal and on the basis of which specific recommendations were made for health.

Now let us move a step further and on to the health of the body - this and the next couple of sections of the book are therefore devoted to the practical implementation of the specific recommendations for health we spoke about. We will now see how to practically implement these in our day-to-day life such that they translate to better health in the body.

As stated earlier, what is central to our existence as a human being is the Self and a Self with the right understanding and the right feeling is a healthy Self. As a part of this right feeling, the Self takes responsibility for the body (to nurture, protect and rightly utilise the body) with a feeling of self-regulation. How does it do that? By charting out a program - a plan of action, if you will.

An example of one such program has been proposed below. It is a program for implementing the health recommendations on the basis of the universal principles of health (based on an understanding of the reality). With the help of a program like this, you can keep the body healthy with minimal use of medication. You can try out this program and verify it for yourself - see if it works for you.

Program for Health



- 1a. Intake includes air, water, sunlight, food (food is nutritious, digestible & tasty and waste is excretable).
all intake through our senses (sound, sight, smell etc)
- 1b. Rising time, sleeping time, eating time...
- 2a. Outcome of labour is production of physical facility
- 2b. No physical facility is produced by exercise

Figure - Part IV.1

The first part of the program (A) focuses on staying healthy

The next part of the program (B) is about correcting temporary disharmony in the body and

The third part (C) is merely a last resort to dealing with a body in permanent disharmony.

So, while (A) can help you stay healthy, (B) can guide you on correcting disharmony and disease in the body, (C) can only suggest how to ‘manage’ a body that is permanently damaged (and can no longer be brought back in harmony) by depending on drugs/machines lifelong.

We all have the choice of (A), (B) or (C). Which would you rather choose?

We chose (A) – A Program for keeping the body healthy (staying healthy)

We saw that to keep the body healthy, we need to pay attention to the following:

Intake

Daily Routine

Work with nature (labour)

Exercise

Postures to regulate the body organs (e.g., yoga)

Regulation of breath (e.g., Pranayama)

We will now take a closer look at each of these, starting with the Intake.

Program for Health - Intake

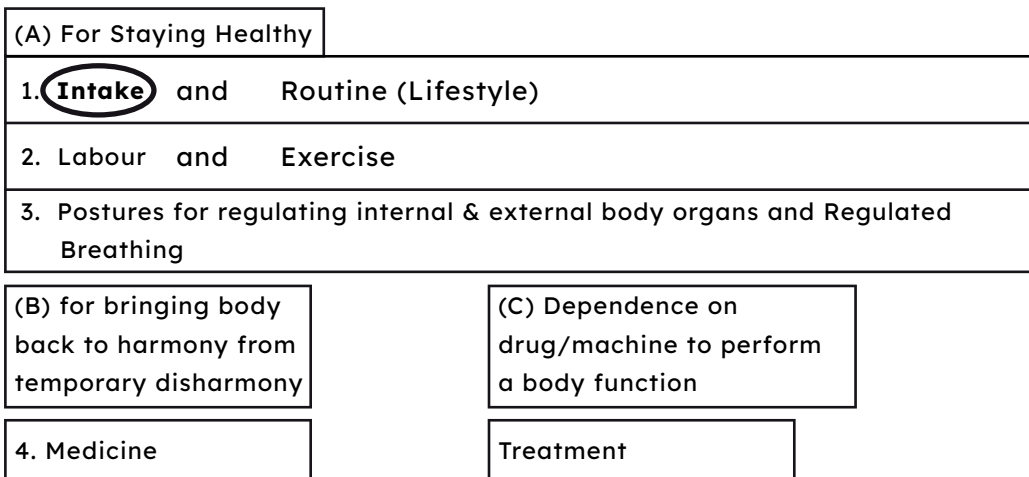


Figure - Part IV.2

Intake

What is meant by 'Intake'?

Intake includes everything we take into the body – food, air, water, sunlight.... in fact everything we take in through our five senses of taste, touch, sight, sound and smell.

Let us start by discussing the intake of food.

Chapter 13

Intake of Food

We all know that the intake of food is vital for the sustenance of the body. The food that we take in is digested and its nutrients assimilated and utilised by the body for energy. This energy maintains the tissues and organs in the body and also helps in the formation of new tissues when needed.

Right intake – intake of the right kind of food

Since food is vital for the proper functioning and maintenance of the body, it is imperative that we understand the right type of food to take in! The right type of food can be the source of vital nutrients like proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals etc. for the body.

So what would be the right type of food to consume? There are four vital aspects that must be taken into consideration when we consume food. These are:

1. Quality of food
2. Quantity of food
3. Preparation ('Sanskara') of food
4. Principles of food consumption.

Now let us look at each of these in detail.

Quality of Food

The quality of the food we take in is determined by four important factors – the food should be

1. Nutritious – it should nurture the body and not harm it
2. Digestible
3. Waste should be Excretable
4. Compatible

We will go through each of these qualities one by one –

Food should be nutritious (nurturing for the body)

Once we understand clearly that the purpose of consuming food is to nourish and nurture the body and to provide it with energy for its various functions, the type of food to be consumed also becomes clear.

There is a lot of awareness today about the carbohydrate, protein, fat, vitamin and mineral contents of foods—these are very visibly labelled on the packaging of many foods sold in the supermarkets today. And of course, it is a fact that proper functioning of the body takes place when the food is rich in nutrients like carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals.

Carbohydrates provide energy to the body and are termed the ‘powerhouse’ of the body. Proteins help to build muscle and lay down new tissues.

Fats (small portions) provide the body with essential fatty acids that the body is unable to form on its own. These fatty acids are essential for normal healthy brain development. Fats also help the body to absorb the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K.

Many other vitamins, minerals and micro-nutrients in the food we consume also play a major role in keeping the body healthy e.g., calcium, magnesium and vitamin D help keep the bones strong, iron in the diet helps to form haemoglobin in the red blood cells which carries oxygen from the lungs to the various parts of the body and thus is essential for normal growth and development of the body and so on.

However, is having all this information sufficient for choosing the right type of foods that will maintain health in the body?

Before we choose our food items on the basis of the quantities of nutrients in them, let us look at this in a little more detail.

‘Carbs’ – The Energy providers

While it is true that carbohydrates provide energy and grains in our diet form the bulk of the foods that provide carbohydrates, the form in which you consume these grains makes all the difference. If the grain is in a form that is close to the whole grain, it is far more nourishing for the body than a grain that has been processed (strained, powdered etc.) even if the labels

proclaim the two to be similar in carbohydrate or ‘calorie’ content e.g., brown rice or hand pounded rice is better for the body than white (polished) rice as it retains more of its nutrients and fibre.

Similarly, when it comes to wheat, the coarse ‘cracked wheat’ form (‘daliya’) is superior to wheat flour (‘Aata’) which in turn is better than the more processed white flour (‘maida’) although all are derived from wheat.

Along the same lines, oats (in their less processed form) cooked at home may take longer to cook but will do the body a lot better than oats in a ready to eat/2-minute ‘masala’/spicy form even though both are forms of oats!

It is also a good practice to include a variety of grains in the diet rather than to limit to one or two types of grains, even among the healthy and nutritious whole grains. The more variety you eat the more the variety of nutrients available to the body.

Pulses – The Muscle Builders

Pulses provide ample proteins to meet the protein requirement of the average adult. It is a myth that animal protein must be consumed in order to meet the protein requirement of the body. Many of the whole pulses e.g., lobia (black eyed peas), black chana, rajmah (kidney beans), whole masoor, moth, whole moong etc. provide far more protein than egg and meat and many compare to chicken as well. It is a good idea to consume a wide variety of these whole pulses (with their covering layer)

Another common myth regarding protein is that animal sources of protein are superior to plant-based protein- not true. While it is true that plant-based proteins may not contain all the essential amino acids (protein building blocks) required by the human body for proper growth, we traditionally consume a combination of grains and pulses (e.g., rice and dal) – such combinations make the meal a complete food because the amino acids that are lacking in one food are compensated for by the presence of these amino acids in the other. There are various such examples of traditional wisdom that have been adopted as practices that we follow even today although we may not be aware of the logic and wisdom behind these practices.

Two major advantages of consuming vegetarian sources of protein are—

- They are rich in fibre (when consumed as whole pulses with their covering layer)
- Being plant based, they have zero cholesterol (plants do not contain any cholesterol) and hence do not pose a risk for high blood pressure, atherosclerosis and heart disease (serious contributors to the ill-health of the body today)^{1,2}

Fruit & Vegetables (the ‘Cleansers’)

Fresh fruit and vegetables are not only rich in vitamins and minerals but also serve as cleansers for the human body. This is because they are rich in fibre due to which they travel through the gastro-intestinal pathway at a fast pace, thus helping the body get rid of waste matter in a timely manner. You can choose from a wide variety of fruit (like banana, papaya, pomegranate, guava etc.) and vegetables including green leafy vegetables, ash gourd, bitter gourd, carrots, beans, beetroot etc. and make them a part of your daily vegetable intake. As mentioned earlier, choose fresh, locally grown seasonal fruits and vegetables for your daily consumption. These are likely to be fresh and more suitable for keeping the body in good health (and less expensive too!).

Milk & Dairy Products (Bone strengtheners)

The body requires an ample quantity of calcium for keeping the bones of the skeletal system strong and healthy and milk is a rich source of calcium and protein. It is important to know, however, what type of milk to consume. Cow milk is traditionally considered superior to buffalo milk. Even in cow milk, A2 milk (milk from indigenous or pure breeds e.g., the desi breeds of cows) is the one that is beneficial for the health of the body while A1 milk that comes from mixed breeds (e.g., the Jersey cow) has been associated with atherosclerosis and heart disease³. Therefore, A2 milk is the one that is recommended for consumption⁴.

It is also equally important to have some idea about the place from which we are sourcing the A2 milk for our consumption. Cows reared for human

milk consumption should be raised as naturally as possible i.e., without the use of hormonal injections, routine use of antibiotics etc. Milk from cows that are fed hormones or given hormonal injections for increased yield of milk is extremely harmful for the health of the body – it may even lead to the premature onset of puberty in children^{5,6}. Also, the cows should be raised in as natural an environment as possible, being let loose and allowed to graze freely on fresh grass.

Besides milk, one can also consume milk products made from A2 milk such as curd, buttermilk and paneer (home-made cheese made from curdled milk). In the process of making paneer by heating and then curdling the milk, while the milk solids are used as paneer, the water content left behind is also extremely beneficial for health and aids the digestive processes of the body.

Fats

Though required in smaller quantities, fats also need to be an essential part of the daily diet.

These fats may be derived from animal sources e.g., butter and ghee (clarified butter made by making curd from milk, churning it till the butter separate and then heating the butter) or from plant sources (e.g., the various oils like sesame or 'til' oil, peanut oil, coconut oil etc.) Nuts like cashews, almonds, pistachios and walnuts are also rich plant sources of fats.

An important point to note is that though ghee is a form of fat derived from an animal source, ghee made from A2 milk does not behave like other saturated fats (fats that are solid at room temperature). So while most saturated fats are harmful for the health of the physical body, ghee is one saturated fat that is an exception to this rule. Modern medical science too has now acknowledged that ghee is perhaps one of the best fat mediums one can use for cooking food!

When it comes to the oils, cold-pressed oils are better for health than oils extracted by other processes as methods that use heat or chemicals for oil extraction tend to denature and damage the oil in the process, and

this oil then in turn damages the body. So far as ghee is concerned, this problem does not arise even though ghee is made by heating the butter extracted from churning of curd made from milk because ghee has a very high smoke point and therefore does not get denatured even at high heat (hence becoming an ideal cooking medium)⁸.

Spices

The use of spices also has a very definite role. Traditional addition of minute quantities of spices to the food when cooking is not just for adding flavour and aroma to the food; these spices also have therapeutic value. As we will see later, some spices help to boost body immunity in a natural way while many others help to rev up digestion in the body so that it absorbs and assimilates nutrients from foods in a more efficient manner. Each and every spice has a role to play in the food we eat and while we use them largely for taste today, conscious awareness of the traditional wisdom behind their use can help us to use them judiciously for correcting minor ailments resulting from disharmony in the body. We will discuss this in more detail later in this book in the chapter on home remedies.

Sweets

Sweets can be consumed sparingly. Here too, less processed is better e.g., jaggery/honey/dates etc. can be used as sweeteners in place of refined white sugar.

And now, a word about

Vegetarian or non-vegetarian foods?

Whether to consume vegetarian or non-vegetarian foods? This question often comes up and results in endless debates. While we are all free to make our own choices, a few points are worth noting - the human digestive system appears to be anatomically and functionally more suited for plant-based foods rather than foods of animal origin as we may be able to see from the following facts⁹:

- The presence of salivary amylase. This is a digestive enzyme present in the saliva of humans and herbivores. Salivary amylase starts acting on the carbohydrates in food as soon as the food enters the mouth and plant-based foods are of course very rich in complex carbohydrates. In contrast, foods of animal origin are mostly fleshy and protein rich and do not have much of carbohydrate content. So, the presence of salivary amylase in the mouth is an indicator of the body's natural design for foods rich in carbohydrates.
- Long and winding intestines. The human digestive system is equipped with long and winding intestines much like those found in herbivorous animals – this works well for plant-based foods which are fibre rich – the fibre content of the food is indigestible and forms the chunk of the waste matter, thus helping to move the waste down through the long digestive tract. In contrast, carnivorous animals that survive on foods of animal origin with no fibre, by design have very short intestines - these ensure that the waste from these foods does not stay in the animal's intestine for too long. Had their intestines been as long as those of humans or other herbivorous animals, the waste would have stayed in the body for a far longer time and thus decayed, causing ill-health.
- Small canine teeth (when compared to the canines of carnivores), stomach pH not as low as that of carnivores and many such anatomic and physiologic characteristics indicate that the human body seems to have been designed for plant-based foods.

Besides the digestive system being more suited for plant-based foods, let us see the effects of the consumption of plant versus animal-based foods. Several studies have been conducted on this topic; one of the largest and most comprehensive was a study involving more than 6000 participants (referred to as 'The China Study') conducted by Dr. T. Colin Campbell, PhD and Dr. Thomas M. Campbell II, MD. Their findings from that study were published in the form of a book by the same name - 'The China Study' (which became a bestseller)¹⁰.

Some of the key conclusions from this study were—

- Plasma cholesterol is positively associated with breast and most cancer mortality rates.
- For optimal health, most statistically significant findings favour whole plant-based foods over animal-based foods
- Animal based protein can lead to the following -
 - Enhance cancer growth
 - Increase blood cholesterol
 - Increase atherogenesis
 - Increase acid load and calcium loss
 - Decrease vitamin D activity
 - Initiate Type I Diabetes

Thus, vegetarian diets prove to be healthier as compared to foods of animal origin (whole plant-based foods have zero cholesterol and a high fibre content). Another important point to remember is that the adult human body requires very little protein (a mere 0.5 gms/kg of body weight) which can readily and sufficiently be provided by plant-based foods e.g., pulses.

While we are of course free to make our own choice about the foods we eat, if we do choose to consume non-vegetarian foods, let us do so with the awareness that they are not likely to nurture the body; rather they may in fact may be a cause of disharmony and disease in the body.

Importance of consuming foods in their natural form

The food we consume today has an increasing number of genetically modified ingredients and synthetic (non-food) ingredients.

What exactly is genetic modification and what are genetically modified or GM foods?

Genetic modification is a technology by which it has become possible to

transfer individual genes selectively from one organism to another – this transfer is possible even between unrelated species (something that is not seen in nature as a natural process). Plants, animals or microorganisms in which the DNA (genetic material) has been altered in this manner are often referred to as GMOs (genetically modified organisms) and foods produced from or using GMOs are referred to as GM foods¹¹.

Genetic modification has led to an alteration of the genetic composition of various plants we regularly consume in our diet. A genetic modification of the seed of the plants we consume often changes the very characteristics of the plant and therefore also changes the way the plant impacts the human body. One example of this is the new-age genetically modified wheat plant, the advent of which has been associated with a stark increase in wheat (“gluten”) allergies in recent times^{12,13}

Various fruit and vegetables are also put through processes of hybridisation e.g., papaya, banana, melons and vegetables like cucumber, tomato, brinjal etc.¹⁴. These do not retain many of the qualities of the indigenous seed, leading to the development of various diseases.¹⁵ Many of the chemicals and pesticides used in growing various foods have also been linked to health issues like acidity etc. and, in some cases, even grave diseases like immune suppression, diminished intelligence, hormone disruption, reproductive abnormalities and even cancer¹⁶.

Processed foods, genetically modified foods and foods with artificial preservatives or synthetic chemicals are a major reason for a variety of the health problems we see today. The human body tends to process foods closest to their natural form in a far more efficient manner than processed ones e.g., the body can assimilate less processed whole grains like brown rice better than the more processed and polished white rice. The same is true of fresh organically grown fruits and vegetables closer to their natural form rather than ones that are heavily laced with spices and highly over cooked with a lot of oil! This makes sense when we consider the fact that as a species, we have survived and evolved over millions of years on whole, natural foods. It is only in the very recent past of the last few hundred years that we have resorted to the addition of artificial ingredients and

toxic pesticides into the foods we consume. It is no wonder then that the incidence of cancer has exploded in the last few centuries.

Taking note of this, we can choose to consume organically grown, unprocessed or less processed foods.

Flavour/taste enhancers

Flavour enhancers are often colourless, odourless, inexpensive powders or liquids that are added to foods in very minute quantities so as to enhance the flavour and taste of the food. Being economical and difficult to recognise when added to foods, it is very easy and profitable for chefs, cooks and food manufacturers to replace real ingredients with these taste enhancers. The use of several such flavour enhancers has been banned by many countries as they have been found to cause severe health problems in the body.

Such taste enhancers may also lead to sensitivities or allergies in some people and even addiction and craving for particular foods¹⁷. Mono Sodium Glutamate (MSG) is an example of a very commonly used flavour enhancer that is often used by the food processing industry and even in many of the smaller restaurants and food businesses. MSG has been proven to be toxic – not just for animals but also for humans.

Headache, migraine, asthma, fatigue, depression, insomnia, dehydration, ‘brain fog’, nausea, dizziness, numbness, heart palpitations, skin rashes – these are just some of the symptoms that many people may be facing on a day-to-day basis due to the addition of artificial ingredients in their food. Sadly, most people continue to deal with such symptoms every day believing them to be a normal part of their life. Perhaps the only way to avoid the consumption of such ingredients may be to avoid preserved and packaged food altogether.

Food should be Digestible

We spoke of the importance of eating foods that nurture the body. There may be times, however, when even nourishing foods may not lead to health in the body. This may happen if the food we consume is not properly digested. So, food should not only be nurturing for the body, it should also be digestible.

The digestibility of food depends on several factors:

- The nature of the food consumed

The food item itself may be naturally light and easy to digest e.g., green gram, or it may be naturally heavy and difficult to digest e.g., black gram

- The digestive capacity of the individual

The digestive capacity of individuals varies. A person with a strong and efficient digestive system may be able to digest with ease, even those foods that are considered difficult to digest while a person with a weaker digestion may find even the lightest of foods, difficult to digest.

- The method of preparation of the food

How we prepare the food is another very important factor. Simple methods of cooking with the addition of specific spices will often convert heavy and difficult to digest foods into ones that are easily digestible. The reverse may also be true – certain cooking methods may cause even light food items to become heavier and difficult to digest e.g., cooking a light food like bottle gourd by deep frying it in oil will make it harder for the body to digest it.

Thus, selecting the right type of food based on one's digestive strength and using the right method to cook it can help to make the food more digestible and therefore more nourishing for the body.

Some examples of heavy foods (foods difficult to digest) are—

- Pulses like black gram
- Protein rich and fatty foods (foods with a high fat content)
- Foods that are cold in temperature
- Preserved foods
- Raw foods
- Overly cooked and deep-fried foods

Examples of light foods (foods that are easy to digest) are—

- Pulses like green gram
- Warm foods
- Freshly cooked foods
- Foods cooked with the addition of spices that aid digestion e.g., the addition of coriander seeds, carom seeds, cumin seeds etc. to vegetables

Excretability of food waste

We have discussed the need for food to be nutritious and digestible. Even if the food is nutritious and digestible and the body utilises what it needs, it can still lead to ill-health if the waste (the part that the body doesn't need) does not leave the body in a timely manner. If the waste matter is not excreted completely or in time (quickly), it will accumulate in the intestines and may be the cause of bloating, a feeling of heaviness in the abdomen, gas pain etc. If this happens frequently and over long periods of time, the waste matter further decays and leads to the formation of toxins which keep circulating in the body causing a disruption of the harmony in the body and ultimately results in permanent ill-health.

So, food being nutritious and digestible is not enough; food should also contain enough fibre so that it gets excreted easily. Highly processed and refined foods are completely devoid of dietary fibre. If such foods are consumed, their waste tends to stick to the walls of the intestines and does not move down the intestines in a timely manner, preventing a proper bowel movement and leading to constipation. Such waste matter stuck to the walls of the intestine stays there and ultimately decays, gets decomposed and leads to disruption of health as mentioned above. Though a lack of fibre is the primary reason for constipation, the following reasons may also be contributory -

Low (less) intake of water,

Not chewing food completely and properly,

Untimely eating of foods - at odd times (discussed in detail in the daily routine) and Untimely sleep (also discussed in more detail in the daily routine).

Examples of foods that are fibre rich and whose waste is easily excretable are:

- Fruit e.g., papaya, banana, watermelon, sapota (Chikoo), orange, pomegranate etc.
- Vegetables e.g., all green leafy vegetables, carrots, beans, beetroot etc.,
- Nuts like almonds, pistachios and seeds like pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds etc.
- Whole grains like millets, quinoa etc. and unprocessed or less processed grains e.g., brown rice/hand pounded rice, cracked wheat or 'daliya' etc.

Examples of foods lacking fibre, not easily excretable and leading to constipation are:

- Processed grains like white/polished rice, foods made from highly processed wheat flour e.g., white bread, noodles, pasta etc. made from white flour or cream of wheat (sooji).
- Fried, frozen or fast foods - Besides lacking fibre, these foods are often full of unhealthy fats, sugars or salts that slow down the digestive process e.g., chips, cakes, pastries, frozen meals etc.
- Meats and all types of non-vegetarian foods - These have zero fibre.
- Milk, though nourishing for the body, also does not have fibre and if taken in excessive quantities without consuming ample water, fruit and vegetables, may also lead to constipation.
- Alcohol - Not only is alcohol harmful (it does not nourish the body), it is also dehydrating and may slow down digestion and irritate the bowel, which can worsen constipation.
- Caffeine - Caffeine per se is dehydrating therefore caffeine in coffee, tea, colas etc. can also lead to constipation. .
- Chocolate - Besides its lack of fibre and the fact that it is often highly processed, the large amounts of fat in chocolate can slow down the digestive process leading to constipation.

In contrast, oils that are extracted naturally as by cold-pressing and

ghee made from A2 milk are greasy, have a lot of fat and yet do not cause constipation; rather they lubricate, reduce dryness and stimulate the motility of the intestine helping in easy excretion of waste matter.

Compatibility of foods

Foods may be nutritious, easily digestible and excretable and may be ideal for keeping the body healthy when consumed separately (in isolation) and yet sometimes, may lead to ill-health in the body when combined with one another. That is why, when we mix two or more foods together, we need to be sure that they are all compatible with each other. The foods also need to be compatible with the constitution of the person who is consuming them.

Why is it that these foods, when consumed in isolation, do not cause a problem for the body but when combined become a source of ill-health? Certain foods, when combined, may result in changes in one of the following ways that may lead to health problems—

1. Change in Properties - The combination may have opposing/reverse properties.
2. Change in Activities – The combination may act in an opposing way in the body as compared to the original.
3. Change in effect due to processing -The combination, when processed in a particular way, may have an untoward effect on the body.
4. Change in effect due to change in proportions - The proportion in which the foods are combined may cause harm to the body.
5. Change in effect due to consumption at the wrong time - The combination, when consumed at the wrong time, may cause harm to the body.

Various examples of such incompatibilities are listed below.¹⁸

- Diet incompatible in a particular region (Desha Viruddha): For example, the intake of dry foods in dry regions or fatty, greasy (unctuous) foods in marshy areas.
- Diet incompatible in a particular season (Kala Viruddha): For instance,

the intake of cold and dry foods in winter or pungent substances in summer.

- Diet incompatible with one's digestive capacity (Agni Viruddha): For example, consuming heavy foods when one's digestive capacity is low or consuming light foods when the digestive capacity is high.
- Diet incompatible in quantity (Matra Viruddha): For example, the intake of only honey and ghee in equal quantity is incompatible. The two can however be taken in combination with other foods and in different proportion.
- Diet incompatible with one's eating habits (Satmya Viruddha): For example, the consumption of sweet and cold foods by a person accustomed to pungent and hot foods.
- Diet incompatible with one's constitution (Dosha Viruddha): For example, the consumption of hot and spicy foods by a person whose body is excessively hot in constitution.
- Diet prepared in an incompatible manner (Sanskar Viruddha): For example, consuming honey after heating.
- Diet incompatibly combined due to opposing potencies (Virya Viruddha): e.g., Kulathi/Kullatha (horsegram) + milk
- Diet incompatible with one's state of health (Avastha Viruddha): For example, the intake of cold, heavy, slimy foods by a person who is lethargic and dull, the intake of heavy food in fever etc.
- Diet in incompatible sequence/order (Krama Viruddha): For example, consuming food before evacuating the bowels, before urination, when one doesn't have an appetite for food or eating only after the excessive aggravation of hunger.
- Diet incompatible as per prescription (Parihar Viruddha): Consuming foods that are against prescription e.g., the intake of hot water after the consumption of honey.
- Diet incompatible as per treatment (Upachar Viruddha): For example, consuming cold substances after the intake of a large quantity of ghee as a part of treatment

- Intake of diet that is incompatibly cooked (Paak Viruddha): For example, the intake of food that is under cooked, over cooked or is burnt in the process of preparation.
- Diet combined incompatibly as per the combination i.e., combination itself is incompatible (Samyoga Viruddha): For example, the intake of sour substances with milk.
- Diet incompatible with one's taste (Hriday Viruddha): For example, consuming foods that one dislikes or finds unpleasant to taste.
- Diet with incompatible qualities (Sampad Viruddha): For example, consuming immature, over mature or putrefied foods.
- Diet incompatible with the set norms, rules and regulations (Vidhi Viruddha): For example, consuming meals at public places.

Examples of Common foods that are incompatible with one another:

- Milk is incompatible with bananas, melons, sour fruits, curd, khichadi, bread containing yeast, cherries etc.
- Honey is incompatible with ghee in equal quantity and with hot liquid or solid foods
- Heating radishes or cooking them with milk, bananas or raisins is incompatible
- Eggs are incompatible with milk, yogurt, melons, cheese, bananas
- Mangoes are incompatible with yogurt, cheese, cucumber
- Corn is incompatible with dates, raisins, bananas
- Lemon is incompatible with yogurt, milk, cucumber, tomato

Common mistakes we make in our daily diets:

- Mixing milk with fruit (e.g., as milk shakes) or consuming milk with sour foods
- Eating cooked foods along with uncooked foods, for example, consuming raw fruits, vegetables and salads with cooked rice.

- Eating cold and hot foods together – For example, eating hot ‘biryani’ or rice etc. with cold drinks; drinking chilled water just before drinking hot tea etc.

Quantity of Food

Consuming the right quantity of food is also essential for maintaining good health. How do you decide the right quantity? These are some of the factors that need to be considered:

- **Digestive capacity:** How much food we can consume safely while maintaining the health of the body depends on the strength of our digestion. If the digestion is strong, consuming even large quantities of food may not disrupt the health of the body while if the digestion is weak, we will be able to consume only small quantities of food in order to maintain the health of the body.
- **Physical activity:** If one is involved in a lot of physical activity/exercise or in strenuous work then larger quantities of food are required by the body and these larger quantities are easily digested. However, those who have more sedentary lifestyles need to consume food cautiously (only in small quantities) so as not to disrupt body health.
- **Type of food:** Foods that are naturally heavy and difficult to digest e.g., black gram, Rajmah (kidney beans), whole chana (garbanzo beans) etc. must be consumed in small quantities while foods that are naturally light, e.g., green gram, ‘murmure’ (puffed rice) etc. can safely be consumed in larger quantities without disrupting health.
- **Time of consumption:** Larger meals can be consumed at noon when the digestive capacity is at its peak and the individual is busy and active while only small quantities of food are advisable at night when both, the digestive capacity and the physical activity are comparatively lower.
- **Season:** In the winter season when more energy is required by the body to maintain its temperature and the metabolic rate of the body is high, larger quantities of food are required and are easily digested by the body while in summer when digestion is weak, smaller quantities of food are required.

Thumb rule for how much food to consume: One should stop eating when one is still slightly hungry and not keep eating until one is absolutely full because it is advised that half the total capacity of the stomach should be filled with solid food, one fourth should be filled with liquid and one fourth should be left vacant to allow for air to move freely in the space¹⁹. So, one can plan to eat in this manner, include both solid and liquid foods in the diet to ensure easy digestion and stop eating even when there appears to be still some space left in the stomach to consume a little more food.

Preparation of food

Preparing the food we eat plays a very important role in the making or 'breaking' of the health of the body. Even the most nutritious food can become unhealthy if cooked improperly. Here are some recommendations for healthful methods of cooking and storing food:

- **Avoid overcooking food:** Over cooking and deep frying of food takes away all the nutrients from food even though it may at times taste good. Such food fails to nourish the body properly and is often very difficult to digest.
- **Avoid under cooking of food:** Under cooked or raw food is heavier to digest and people with weaker digestive systems may find such food extremely difficult to digest. Proper cooking kills germs and renders the food soft and easy to digest.
- **Use spices judiciously:** We have a rich tradition of using several herbs and spices like ginger, turmeric, black pepper, cumin (jeera) etc. to stimulate the body's digestive fire and to help the body absorb and assimilate food more efficiently. Care should be taken however to consume these spices in a limited quantity as overuse of some of these spices may result in the excessive production of heat in the body, digestive disturbances, acidity and sometimes even to the formation of ulcers.
- **Avoid reheating food:** Reheating of food, especially if the food undergoes an extreme change in temperature, often results in chemical changes in the food that can cause harm to the body, ultimately leading to ill-health

and disease. Eating freshly cooked food, therefore, is ideal for the health of the body.

- Choose the right utensils for cooking food: Earthen pots and utensils made of iron or those made of inert and stable compounds like stainless steel are safe choices. Utensils made of copper or brass are okay for storing alkaline substances but are not safe for acidic substances as these lead to a reaction that disrupts the body harmony.

On the other hand, utensils made of aluminum or plastic or those having a non - stick surface coating are unsafe for both cooking and storing foods. They are not only harmful but extremely hazardous for the health of the body. Such utensils should be strictly avoided in order to prevent ill-health and disease (including life threatening diseases like cancer).

- Choose the right utensils for storing food: If food is cooked properly but is not stored in the right utensil, this too can lead to ill-health in the body, Food can safely be stored in steel, brass, iron or glass containers while plastic containers, aluminum vessels/lunch boxes and the use of aluminum foil, plastic wrap etc. to pack/store food should be avoided to prevent leeching of chemicals from the containers into the food which could then lead to the build- up of toxic chemicals in the body.
- Avoid preserving food in refrigerators as far as possible: When we preserve food in the refrigerator, the food undergoes harmful chemical changes and consumption of this food often leads to disruption of the body harmony, eventually becoming a cause for ill-health and disease.

Some general recommendations for the consumption of food²⁰:

- Food should be fresh and warm - Food that is warm not only tastes good but also stimulates the production of digestive enzymes in the body, thus aiding digestion while foods that are cold or chilled, reduce the formation of enzymes making the digestive process less efficient. Reheating of food is not advisable.
- Unctuous food is good for consumption: Food with judicious amounts of greasy substances like oil and ghee helps in providing unctuousness to

the body preventing dryness. Further, it helps in lubricating the intestinal tract, thus stimulating proper bowel movements.

- A medium pace of consumption is best: Eating very slowly decreases the production of enzymes while eating very fast disrupts one's digestive capacity. Both hamper digestion.
- It is best to consume food only after the previous meal has been digested. If one consumes food before the previous meal has been digested properly, the partly digested food from the previous meal mixes with the undigested food of the current meal, resulting in improper digestion. Frequent snacking between meals also hampers one's digestive capacity.
- It is important to consume food that is hygienic and to consume it in the right environment – an environment free from pollution for instance. We can avoid areas where we are uncomfortable due to any reason (e.g., noisy, dirty or crowded places).
- If the self is in a state of harmony when consuming food, the food gets digested better. However, if we consume food when we have negative emotions (i.e., when we have feelings that are not naturally acceptable to us e.g., anger, fear, guilt, hatred etc.), such emotions lead to interference in the digestive process causing even the most nutritious food to behave like poison in the body!
- Pay complete attention to the food you are eating. When we are talking, laughing, watching TV or using the mobile 'phone while eating, the Self is distracted and unable to pay attention to the food that is being eaten, the way it is being eaten (whether at the right time or not, with proper chewing or not etc.) and the Self also does not pay attention to the signals in the body. The Self is thus unable to decide how much to eat and when to stop eating and as a consequence, may end up overeating, resulting in the improper digestion and assimilation of food.
- On the other hand, when we pay attention to the food we are eating, we are able to choose the right food to eat (i.e., what to eat); we are also able to perceive the subtle signals in the body and therefore are able to take the right decisions at meal times (e.g., how much to eat and when to stop eating).

- The Self being relaxed and in harmony and instructing the body to sit in the 'Vajrasana' posture for 10-15 minutes after a meal helps in better digestion of the meal. On the other hand, rushing to work or school immediately after having food or having food 'on the go' interferes with the digestive process and is detrimental to health.

In a nutshell, when it comes to food, a few points to keep track of—

1. Think fresh, regional and seasonal foods
2. Whole grains, whole pulses, less processed foods
3. Variety of grains, pulses and vegetables
4. Lightly cooked on low flame
5. Moderate quantity at right time
6. Right storage utensils
7. Self in harmony

Test Your Understanding

1. Make a program for yourself to stay healthy. Name some of the practices you will adopt in your program to stay healthy.
2. Each time you eat something the entire day, check - are you primarily eating to fulfill the need of the body or are you eating primarily for the Self or are you fulfilling the need of both? e.g., are you eating healthy food (a requirement of the body); tasty food that is not healthy (for temporary happiness in the Self) or healthy food that is tasty (fulfilling the needs of both Self and body). Find out what was the priority

When you eat tasty food, find out—

Does it make you feel happy...? If so, for how long?

Is it in line with your natural acceptance? When eating, do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable within?

Do this exercise daily for a week, maintaining a daily log for the week.

For example—

<u>Date</u>	<u>Meal</u>	<u>Food</u>	<u>Motivation #1</u>
28-9-23	Lunch	Noodles	#1 Taste
	Dinner	Roti & vegetables	#1 Health (#2 Taste)

3. Take the list of foods from the above exercise and for each meal that you eat in a day, label each food item as -

- Nutritious (N) or not (+/x)
- Digestible (D) or not
- Excretable (E) or not
- Tasty (T) or not

Tick all that are applicable e.g., some foods may be N, D and E; others may be N/D but not E and so on.

Analyse your findings at the end of the day and note down what percentage of food you ate to nurture the body (based on your Natural Acceptance/NA), what percentage you ate based on your beliefs/pre-conditionings (PC) and what percentage you ate for taste alone (sensation/S). Do this exercise for the entire week.

4. While eating every meal, check - are you paying attention to your meal or are you busy with your mobile, TV, laptop, book, newspaper etc.? When you pay attention to the meal, are you able to notice an enhanced taste of the food?
5. For one meal, perhaps breakfast, eat only fruit (e.g., bananas/papaya etc.). Observe the impact of the meal after 1-2 hours - e.g., are you alert or do you feel sleepy/drowsy/; does the body feel light or heavy; any other observations? Write down what food you ate and all the above observations about its effect. Also note whether you are hungry for your next meal or not.

The next day eat fried, heavy, spicy foods for breakfast (e.g., puris, pakodas etc.). Observe the impact of the meal after 1-2 hours - e.g.,

are you alert or do you feel sleepy/drowsy/; does the body feel light or heavy; also make some more observations about the impact of the food you ate – impact on the same day (e.g., gas/ bloating of stomach/ heartburn or acidity –burning in the chest region, are you hungry for your next meal or not etc.) and

Impact on the next day (e.g., able to pass motion easily next morning or with difficulty; soft/hard stool etc.); any other observations you could make. Write down what food you ate and all your observations about its impact.

What conclusion could you draw from your observations? Which type of food do you think was nurturing for the body?

6. Watch the documentary “Forks over Knives”. What were your three key takeaways from this film? Note down three changes you plan to make in your intake in order to stay healthy.

Chapter 14

Intake of Water

After the intake of food, let us now discuss the intake of water.

Water constitutes > 70% of the human body. It is essential for life and in its absence, the human body would not survive for more than a few days. However, it is important to know the right type (quality) of water to drink, the right quantity of water to drink and the right time to drink it.

To understand and know more about the intake of water we can consider the following:

Quality of water

Quantity of water

Preparation/'sanskar' of water

Consumption of water - further suggestions

Quality of Water

Purity

The water we consume today comes to us from groundwater, wells, rivers, lakes, streams, and reservoirs²¹. In earlier times, we were able to consume tap water directly but today, due to our water sources being polluted and the fact that we are not able to ensure that contamination free water reaches our homes, we are employing various methods of intervention to try and purify/improve the quality of water reaching our homes.

It is not just the presence of naturally occurring chemicals and minerals in the ground water (e.g., arsenic, radon, uranium, fluoride etc.) that are a consideration; the quality of water reaching our homes from the various sources also has a lot to do with how we ourselves interact with nature! When we use unnatural substances in our agricultural practices for growing

crops (e.g., chemical fertilizers, nitrates, pesticides etc.), it leads to our drinking water also getting polluted with these chemical substances and these substances then cause a lot of harm to the body (even life-threatening diseases like cancer).

Our sources of drinking water may also be getting polluted as a result of our manufacturing processes, sewage overflow, malfunctioning wastewater treatment systems etc.

While it is important to have safe and potable drinking water, we seem to have discarded most traditional systems of water purification and replaced them by newer technologies. However, does this truly improve the quality of the water we are drinking today? Perhaps we need to have a balance between the newer technologies and the traditional practices.

Today the common methods we are using for water purification are UV ray filtration, distillation and more recently, reverse osmosis. However, the effectiveness of these newer technologies and their impact on the health of the body continue to be questioned.

Natural water contains a large number of minerals that are considered beneficial (and at least 14 that are said to be essential) for the health of the human body. These elements are important for maintaining the body bone and membrane structure (Ca, P, Mg, F), the electrolyte balance (Na, K, Cl), metabolic processes (Zn, Cu, Se, Mg, Mn, Mo), oxygen binding (Fe), and hormone functions (I, Cr)²², to name a few. When we consume demineralised water or water almost or completely devoid of dissolved minerals e.g., as a result of membrane filtration by reverse osmosis or nano-filtration, electro-dialysis etc. it results in a deficiency of micronutrients in the body. This may lead to a lower pH (acidity), weakened bones, reduced immune defence systems of the body etc.

So, if you have the good fortune of access to uncontaminated tap water, you can go ahead and consume it. Or if you have water coming from clean water bodies like wells, rivers etc. or are pumping underground water, you can have it tested for purity and if found to be fit, you can consume it.

If you do not have access to safe drinking water and need to use one of

the purification technologies/ methods mentioned above, you may want to use a process that doesn't completely demineralise the water. Another option to consider may be to store the purified water in an earthen pot (this would add some elements into the water naturally) or storing tap water in a copper utensil (see storage of water below).

pH

The pH of water measures how acidic/basic the water is. On a scale of 0 to 14, with 7 being neutral, a pH of less than 7 indicates that the water is acidic while a pH of greater than 7 indicates that it is alkaline. It is recommended for the pH of drinking water to be in the range of ~ 6.5-8.5; mildly alkaline water is considered to be better for the health of the body.

If one has the habit of consuming packaged beverages, it is important to note that most beverages/drinks we are consuming today (e.g., sodas or 'cold drinks' i.e., carbonated beverages) are acidic in nature and cause harm to the body by reducing the pH of blood. Alcoholic beverages are of course highly acidic and harmful to the body.

Temperature

Warm water is considered to be ideal for drinking. It stimulates the digestive system of the body, promotes the secretion of enzymes and digestive juices, liquefies greasy and fatty substances in the intestines flushing them out, destroys germs and, overall, is beneficial for the health of the body. Consuming hot water regularly helps strengthen the digestive and immune systems of the body.

When water is consumed at room temperature, it does not have all the benefits listed above but is still considered healthy for consumption as it does not interfere with most metabolic functions of the body. Chilled water, on the other hand, often inhibits the production of enzymes in the body, reduces the digestive capacity and hence disrupts the health of the body. Therefore, it is not considered advisable to drink chilled water.

Quantity of water

As already mentioned earlier, a significant part of the body (>70%) is water- the blood, brain and heart are made up of almost 75 percent water, the lungs are roughly 83 percent water. The bones in the body are something we think of as hard and solid but even here, we may be surprised to note that almost a third of what constitutes the bones in the body is water!

It is therefore obvious that proper hydration of the body with adequate intake of water is essential for keeping the body healthy. At the same time, an excess of water intake is also harmful for the body. Inadequate intake of water or excessive loss of fluid from the body may result in a state of dehydration of the body while excessive intake of fluid, more than that required by the body, may result in over hydration. Both instances may lead to electrolyte imbalances and a disruption of the body harmony as we will discuss later.

So how much water does one need to drink?

Estimated Daily Requirement of Water²³

This may vary for different people based on several factors; let us look at these one by one.

Specific to Age and Gender

A recommendation for the intake of water based on the body requirement specific to age and gender was put forward by the Food and Nutrition Board in 2004. A rough guideline for what would be an appropriate adequate daily intake of water for various age groups is depicted in the tables below.

Suggested water intake for boys' and girls' from birth to eight years of age:

0-6 months	0.7 L/day of water (in the form of human breast milk)
7 – 12 months	0.8 L/day of water (in the form of human breast milk along with complementary foods, water and related beverages)
1 – 3 years	1.3L/day
4 – 8 years	1.7 L/day

Suggested water intake for ages nine and older

9 - 13 years	
Boys	2.4 L/day
Girls	2.1 L/day
14 - 18 years	
Boys	3.3 L/day
Girls	2.3 L/day
19 - 70+	
Man	3.7 L/day
Woman	2.7 L/day

The above charts depict general recommendations or suggestions – these are not absolute figures. The actual quantities of required water intake may vary not just based on age and gender but also on the basis of the body constitution of an individual, the amount of physical labour/exercise an individual does, the kind of diet a person has, the season etc.

Specific to Body Constitution

Some people have a body that constitutionally has excessive heat (e.g., type ‘B’/’Pitta’/Mesomorph type). Such a person tends to have profuse formation of sweat in the body; the body has a tendency to get dehydrated easily and therefore requires large amounts of water. In contrast, in a person with a constitutionally colder body that has a tendency towards fluid retention, the body tends to conserve water and thus requires smaller quantities of water. So, body constitution plays a major role in a person deciding how much water to drink.

Specific to Physical Activity

People who are physically active (e.g., farmers, outdoor labourers, athletes etc.) tend to sweat/perspire more and hence need to drink more water than people who are sedentary (e.g., people in desk jobs). Air-conditioning of rooms tends to make the air in the room dry and therefore people habituated to sitting in such rooms need more water to maintain the regular state of hydration of the body.

Specific to Season

In the hot summer, the body needs a higher intake of water as a large amount of water is lost through evaporation from the skin while in winter and in the rainy season the requirement of the body for water decreases as there is very little loss of water through evaporation from the body.

Specific to Time of Day/Night

The practice of drinking 50 ml to one litre of water soon after waking up early in the morning (before sunrise) is known to be extremely beneficial for the health of the body and this practice is quite prevalent. While drinking this large a quantity of water before sunrise is beneficial, the same practice if followed a little later in the day or after sunrise is not so beneficial. Why? Because as the sun comes up and the heat increases, changes occur in the human body also – after the sun comes up, the secretion of gastric juices starts building up in the stomach. At this time, if one drinks a large quantity of water, it will dilute the gastric juices in the stomach interfering with and making the process of digestion less efficient.

It is true however that during the day when the sun is up and it is hot, the body does require more hydration. So, when do we drink the water? If we pay attention to the signals in the body, we will become aware of the subtle signals that indicate the body's need for water. We can take these as our cues for drinking water. This way we will be able to drink as much as the body needs and not in excess. So we really don't need to carry huge bottles of water everywhere we go and forcibly keep drinking water even when we're not thirsty; even when the body does not need it!

The body requires more water during the day when it is hot than it does at night. Drinking excess water later in the day i.e., during the late evening hours or at night can lead to disturbance in our sleep due to our having to wake up for frequent urination. This does not merely lead to a disturbance in sleep. As we will discuss in the section on routine, night time sleep is when much of the body's repair and regeneration processes go on. Disturbance in sleep at this time means a disruption of these ongoing repair and regeneration processes and this ultimately leads to ill-health.

Water intake in relation to food

Should one drink water along with meals or should one not drink water with one's meals? This is a question that often comes up. What is suggested is to drink small quantities of water (i.e., small sips of water) while eating food²⁴. It is said that if water is consumed at the beginning of the meal, it leads to emaciation of the body; if consumed during the meal, albeit in a few small sips, it maintains the body size and if consumed after the meal (at the end of the meal), it causes the body to become stout^{25,26}.

Why only small sips, why not larger quantities of water? If one drinks larger quantities of water with meals (e.g., a glass or two), this excess water dilutes the digestive juices being secreted in the body and this prevents the consumed food from being digested properly while if one doesn't drink any water at all with the meal, it makes the food too dry and prevents adequate mixing and churning of the food in the stomach, again preventing proper digestion of food (unless the meal itself has plenty of water e.g., soups etc.) so the key to augmenting one's digestive fire is to drink small sips of water in between the bites of food.²⁷

This is especially useful when we switch from one type of taste to another type of taste in the same meal. Our entire meal does not have foods with the same chemical composition – some of the foods we consume may be acidic while others may be alkaline; some may be protein rich while others may be rich in carbohydrates or fats. When we start the meal, the taste buds on the tongue generate some signals with information about the chemical composition of the food we have taken. Some of the food particles from this food stay on the tongue and even when we switch to a different type of food, the tongue initially continues to generate the signals representing the previous food we took, thus generating misinformation. When we sip water in between different food types, the water rinses the taste buds, removing the particles of the previous food consumed. The taste buds on the tongue then recognise the food correctly and therefore generate the right signals regarding the chemical composition of the food leading to the secretion of the right type of digestive juices that are suitable for digesting the various different foods we consume in an efficient manner.

Preparation of Water (Improving its Qualities for Consumption)

There are many methods by which we can improve the quality of the water available to us, such that it becomes more suitable for our consumption.

Boiling of Water

There was a time when we could safely consume the water that reached our homes –the water available to us from taps in our homes. Unfortunately, now that we have polluted our rivers, streams and other water bodies, many a time it may be that tap water is no longer safe for us to consume as is. Boiling is perhaps one of the simplest ways of purifying water, making it safe for human consumption. It effectively rids the water of various bacteria, viruses, etc. that may harm the body.

The method is simple enough – take water in a large pot or kettle and bring it to a rolling boil for one full minute. Then take it off the fire and allow to cool down till it is luke warm. It is suggested to drink water at this temperature rather than when it is fully cooled down to room temperature as slightly warm water is closer in temperature to the temperature prevailing within the body. Warm water also aids the smoother and more efficient functioning of various body processes as given below.

Advantages to consuming slightly warm water (as opposed to cold water):

- Improved functioning of the body’s digestive and immune systems - Drinking warm water helps break the food down into smaller particles more easily, making the digestive process smoother.
- Improved blood circulation – With improvement of blood circulation, there is a lower risk of developing problems linked to blood pressure, cardiovascular disease etc.
- Less build-up of toxins - Drinking warm water daily in the morning helps flush out the toxins from the kidneys and the fat deposits from the intestines.
- Prevention of premature aging – Since warm water helps in more

efficient digestion of food and since digestion is linked to many other body processes, better digestion translates to improvement and more efficient functioning of many other systems e.g., more efficient repair of skin cells and hence less formation of wrinkles etc.

- Relief of nasal congestion and sore throat - Mucous may build up in the mucous membranes of the nose, mouth and throat. Drinking warm water helps loosen thick mucous and get rid of it, thus soothing stuffy noses and sore throats.
- Effective movement of bowels – Warm water in the early morning hours helps increase gut motility and hence helps in easier and more complete evacuation of the bowels. Warm water may thus help avert constipation and the stomach pain linked to it.
- Help in weight loss - Drinking warm water early in the morning increases body temperature and the body's fat burning capacity, readily leading to weight loss.

Adding herbs and spices to water:

We regularly use several spices and these are freely available to us in our kitchens. Many of these spices and herbs can be added to our drinking water and boiled along with it to purify and enhance the properties of water. Some examples of the spices we can use are:

- Cumin seeds (jeera) – Adding cumin seeds to water, boiling it and then consuming this water helps improve the body's digestive capacity and relieves abdominal pain due to indigestion; in women, it also relieves pain associated with the menstrual cycle.

Mucous accumulated in the chest is also easily removed by this.

- Ginger is also an example of a herb that can be added to water and boiled. Ginger has traditionally been used since centuries in this manner. It is known to improve blood circulation and has anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. It also serves as a remedy for flatulence and poor digestion, treating cramps etc.

- Consuming water boiled with cinnamon sticks helps reduce fat and regulates blood sugar levels.
- Clove helps in the digestion process and is very useful in relief from toothaches.
- Adding lemon or lime (excellent sources of vitamin C, an important antioxidant) to warm water and then drinking this water helps neutralise free radicals in the body and serves as a great immunity booster that prevents colds, coughs etc.
- Consuming mint leaves added to water activates the body's salivary glands and aids in the digestion of food. As mint has cooling properties, it helps reduce acidity and heart burn/stomach pain associated with indigestion.
- The traditional practice of adding the roots of the plant *Hemidesmus indicus* (Sariva) to water is very common in summer. This helps reduce excess heat in the body, prevents heat stroke and is also known to help purify blood.

These are but a few examples. We will refer to many such herbs and spices in the chapter on home remedies and see how we can use them to maintain harmony and health in the body.

Storage of Water

How we store our drinking water is also an extremely important step towards consuming water in a form that is most suitable for the health of the human body. The age old practice of storing water in copper utensils that has been mentioned in ancient Indian texts, is seeing a revival in modern times. Why? One major advantage of storing water in a copper vessel is that the water naturally gets purified in the process – storing water in this manner rids the water of microorganisms, fungi, algae and bacteria (even those that cause life threatening diseases like cholera, typhoid, paratyphoid etc.) that may otherwise have led to severe ill-health of the body. This is now supported by several scientific studies. It has also been found that the copper content of water stored in copper containers is well within the permissible limits of the World Health Organization (WHO)²⁸.

In the summer, earthen pots can be used for storing water. These not only cool the water making it more suitable for drinking in the hot climate and give it a pleasant taste and odour but also provide the body with many important micronutrients (present in the earthen material constituting the pots).

A word about packaged drinking water:

We may have the assumption that packaged and bottled drinking water is superior to the water available to us from taps in our homes. However, it may come as a surprise that the standards employed for the safety of bottled water today may not be very different from those for tap water!

Further, storing water in plastic bottles and containers for long periods of time is not without its own side effects – many plastic containers have harmful chemical ingredients that leach into the water and lead to ill- health in the body. Avoiding storing water in plastic containers is an obvious way of keeping ourselves and the environment healthy.

Some Myths Regarding Consumption of Water

Many of the myths relating to the intake or consumption of water may already have been addressed in the discussion so far but to further clarify a few things, let us separate the reality from the myth, the facts from the fiction:

Myth – The more water one drinks, the better it is.

Fact - Since the body comprises >70 % water and water is essential for the health of the body, we may be under the influence of the myth ‘the more the better’. However, just because something is good for the body doesn’t mean that one should consume it in unlimited quantities. Excess of anything can be harmful – even water.

The body has a thirst mechanism that indicates its need for water- one can rely on this for one’s water intake. So, taking note of the natural urge of thirst and drinking water when one is thirsty is a good principle to go by (as opposed to e.g., ignoring one’s thirst or not paying attention to the

thirst and thereby confusing it with the need to eat food in place of drinking water etc.). At the same time, there is no need to keep drinking water all day even when one is not at all thirsty or drinking water at odd times though not thirsty e.g., when one is hungry.

Myth – Water must be boiled for it to be safe for drinking.

Fact – The fact is that in an unpolluted environment, even rain water (if collected and stored hygienically) can be used for drinking (provided it maintains its colourless, odourless and tasteless quality).

However, if you have become accustomed to consuming boiled water, you may continue to do so or if you are accustomed to drinking water without boiling, you could continue with un-boiled water; it is advisable to do so rather than to keep switching between the two.

One point to note is that even if you are boiling water for consumption, it is better to consume it the same day rather than to store it for longer periods (to prevent the risk of contamination).

Myth – Water being good for the body, anytime is a good time to drink water.

On the contrary, just as too large or too small a quantity of water may actually be harmful for the body, drinking water at all odd hours may also lead to ill-health.

It is suggested to have the larger part of one's total daily intake of water in the first half of the day rather than in the latter half. And in the first half, it is extremely beneficial to drink water before sunrise. At this time, you may consume even up to one litre of water without any problem.

However, if this same one litre of water is consumed a little later, after sunrise, it may actually cause harm to the body because with the rising sun there is increasing heat (both outside and in the body); as the heat increases, the secretion of the digestive juices in the body increases and excess water intake at this time ends up diluting these digestive enzyme secretions, interfering with the body's digestive capacity, thus leading to ill-health in the body.

Not only this, the excess water, not being required by the body, has now to be gotten rid of –the body has to remove it; this puts an unnecessary load on the kidneys causing them extra strain.

Thus, though the human body is $> 2/3$ water, judicious intake of water is required in order to keep the body in good health.

Test Your Understanding

1. What are some of the factors with the help of which you can decide the specific requirement of your body for water? On the basis of this, check if your daily intake of water is appropriate or not.
2. In relation to your meals, is your intake of water at the right time and in the right quantity (e.g., are you drinking water with a clear gap of $\frac{1}{2}$ hr. before or 1 hour after meals)? Why is this important? What if you regularly tend to feel thirsty while eating your meal – what program can you make to solve this problem? (Hint: increase water intake at other times; increase intake of watery/soupy foods if the food is too dry).
3. Make a note of some of the myths regarding the intake of water and also note down the truth behind these myths i.e., the actual facts.

Chapter 15

Intake of Air

So far, we have discussed the intake of food and water. Now, let us take a closer look at the intake of air.

We are all aware that the intake of air is essential for the survival of the human body – it is a well-known fact that the body cannot survive for more than a few minutes in the absence of oxygen. How much air do we take in? It is estimated that the average individual inhales about 14,000 litres of air per day!

Quality Of Air We Breathe

The quality of the air we breathe in, both indoors in our homes as well as outdoors, is important. Taking in fresh air in the outdoors on a daily basis is extremely beneficial for the health of the body and you can plan the day in such a way that this becomes a part of your daily routine e.g., going for a daily early morning walk in an open park or garden area. The air in such areas and at that time of day is likely to have minimal quantities of air pollutants.

While the fresh outdoor air is far better for the health of the body than being indoors, we can also try to improve the quality of air in our homes by keeping the windows open to let in as much fresh air as possible and allow cross-ventilation of air to take place inside the home.

Quantity Of Air We Take In

The amount of air in the lungs is measured in terms of lung volumes and lung capacities. In the average ‘healthy’ adult, the total lung capacity (i.e., the maximum amount of air the lungs can hold at a given moment of time) is said to be about 6 litres. This includes the air we inhale (take in) + the air that was left in the lungs after the previous exhalation or breathing out

(because the lungs are not completely empty or devoid of air when we breathe out-some air remains trapped in the lungs).

The maximum air an individual has the potential to inhale into the lungs in one inspiration is up to 2.5 litres²⁹. However, an average human being inhales only about 500ml of air in an inhalation which means that we tend to actively use only 20 percent of our lung capacity at any given time! This is because we breathe in a very shallow manner inhaling and exhaling only small quantities of air while we have the potential to use a much larger lung volume. Imagine how much more air we could take in if we inhaled in the right way and how much more oxygen could reach all the body organs. This would help the organs to perform their task that much more efficiently. Shortly we will look at what we can do to breathe in a more efficient manner taking in more air with each breath.

Process of Breathing

As mentioned earlier, the intake of breath is vital for life. The process of breathing in is termed ‘inhalation’ while the process of breathing out is termed ‘exhalation’. While the process of breathing is an activity that goes on in the body, the decision of when to breathe in and when to breathe out, whether to breathe deeply or in a shallow manner, whether we breathe in a smooth and steady manner or whether we breathe in a jerky and erratic way- all of these decisions are taking place in the Self, though we may or may not be aware of them.

We can see this quite simply with the example of holding our breath-you will be able to note that you can decide to hold your breath for 3 or 4 or 5 counts and give instructions to the body accordingly and the body follows; similarly, you can decide to breathe deeply to a count of 4 or 5 or 6 and give instructions to the body accordingly and the body follows.

However, much of the time, we are unaware of the Self and its role in the activities of the body. When we are calm and have harmony in our thoughts and feelings, our breathing is steady and rhythmic while when we are disturbed (have contradiction or disharmony in our feelings and thoughts),

our breathing becomes jerky and erratic. Notice how you are breathing the next time you are angry and this will become quite apparent.

Once we take a breath in, the process of 'gas-exchange' takes place in the small blood vessels or capillaries in the lungs. By this process, the oxygen (from the air we took into the lungs) diffuses into the blood stream from where it goes to the various tissues where it is needed. Similarly, the carbon-di-oxide formed in the various tissues as a result of the many metabolic processes that go on in the body travels from the tissues to the blood and this then diffuses from the blood back to the lungs from where it is expelled out in the form of an exhalation (breathing out).

Normal Breathing Pattern

The normal average respiratory rate for an adult at rest is said to be 12 to 16 breaths per minute³⁰. However, you may be able to note that there can be many variations to this- e.g., a person accustomed to regulating the breath, say with the help of certain breathing exercises, as with 'pranayama', may have a lower breath rate than most people (and yet may be taking in more oxygen with each breath!).

Coming to what a normal breathing pattern would look like, this is how it would appear-

When we breathe in (during inspiration), the chest expands and the belly rises up/comes up while when we breathe out (during expiration), the chest contracts and the belly goes inward. This is the right way to breathe because when we breathe in, the lungs expand, the diaphragm muscle moves downwards and the belly gets pushed outwards, This is referred to as diaphragmatic breathing and can very easily and prominently be seen in babies who are sleeping – their bellies rise up with every breath taken in and fall back with every breath out. Of course, their breathing appears far more rapid than that of an adult because it *is* more rapid (babies breathe more than 20 times a minute; a normal new-born baby breathes 40-50 times a minute!).

Normally we tend to be unaware of our breathing pattern and pay attention

to it only when we have a problem/some difficulty breathing but if we are not breathing properly, we are doing much harm to the body. We can check to make sure that we are breathing correctly by placing our palm on the abdomen; when we breathe in, the hand on the abdomen should rise and when we breathe out, it should fall.

Impact of Air (Oxygen) Intake on the Body

An average man living to the age of 80 may take more than 672 million breaths during his lifetime³¹ and between 17,280 and 23,040 breaths a day³²! So let us start paying attention to our breathing.

We mentioned that the average total lung capacity (TLC) of a healthy adult is about 6 litres. However, we do not utilize our lungs to their full capacity when we breathe. We neither inhale fully (deeply) nor do we exhale fully (completely); we have the capacity to inhale at least 2.5 litres of air with each breath provided we inhale fully. However, we normally breathe in a very shallow manner inhaling and exhaling only ~500ml of air with each breath (i.e., we inhale less than 20% of our capacity)!

About 20% of the air, we inhale is oxygen³³ so when we breathe in less air, we take in less oxygen. The human body requires oxygen for practically all day-to-day functions like digesting food, moving the muscles (going for a walk or run or any sport) etc. All vital body organs like brain, heart, kidneys etc. need oxygen for optimal functioning:

- The brain, though constituting only 2 percent of the body weight, consumes 20 percent of the oxygen we breathe in and 20 percent of the energy we consume³⁴. Even when we are merely thinking, the brain is involved and needs oxygen and since the brain is also used to help regulate many other body functions, all of these functions are affected as a result.
- The heart also requires adequate oxygen to perform its function properly (it beats about 100,000 times in a day, pumping about 7,500 litres of blood to all the parts of the body! For this it obviously needs a large amount of energy and a large amount of oxygen in order to maintain the blood circulation in an efficient manner.

- The kidneys too play a vital role in the body. They get rid of unwanted and toxic waste from the body by filtering the blood and forming urine which constitutes the waste chemicals to be thrown out of the body. For this the kidneys consume ~10% of the oxygen available to the body, though they constitute only 0.5% of body mass,
- Then there are about 600 muscles in the human body³⁵. All of these require oxygen for contraction which enables efficient movement of the body.

In fact, all the organs, tissues and cells of the body require an ample quantity of air (oxygen) for the various metabolic processes to be carried out smoothly in the body. A decrease in oxygen content in the body leads to a sub-optimal or less than optimal functioning of the body i.e., the body is unable to function as efficiently as it should and ultimately succumbs to ill-health as a result of this.

So, for enhancing the efficiency of all the cells, tissues and organs of the body, we need to understand what to do to improve the quality of the air we breathe in and we also need to know the right way to breathe by which we can take in larger quantities of air with each breath i.e., how to breathe better.

Improving the Quality of the Air We Breathe

The quality of the air we breathe in has a definite and profound impact on the health of the body. Polluted air is a major concern in today's modern world with its fast pace, increased industry and the aggressive rise in the number of factories, automobiles etc.

As per WHO data, 9 out of 10 people breathe in air containing high levels of pollutants and every year, air pollution kills an estimated seven million people worldwide³⁶. On entering the body, pollutants affect not just the lungs but also the various organs and organ systems of the body – a third of deaths from stroke, lung cancer and heart disease are attributed to air pollution³⁷.

Improving the quality of air Indoors

- Avoid the household use of substances that may have chemicals polluting the very air you breathe e.g. mosquito repellent coils, certain cosmetics, fragrances etc.
- Avoid smoking – it not only damages your own lungs but also those of others who may happen to inhale the smoke.
- Improve ventilation in the house by keeping windows open and allowing increased inflow of outdoor air and cross-ventilation of air.
- Various air cleaners are available in the market today that may help clean the air (though their effectiveness and efficiency may be doubtful).
- Planting shrubs, plants and trees in the vicinity e.g., in the garden or compound of your house. This would help clean the air around your home and keeping the windows open would help the indoor air to also be fresher and cleaner.

Improving the quality of air Outdoors

Pollution of the air outdoors causes exposure to and the breathing in of small particulate pollutants, 2.5 microns or less in diameter (PM2.5). This may lead to various chest infections, lung diseases etc. causing ill-health in those exposed to such poor-quality polluted air.

The following may be helpful in improving the quality of the air we breathe outdoors:

- Judicious use of motor two-wheeler and four-wheeler vehicles and increased use of public transport, low-emission vehicles and un-motorised modes of transport (e.g., walking, going by bicycle etc.) wherever possible.
- Planting trees and shrubs – this would help clean the environmental air. One can grow plants like tulsi (holy basil) that emit oxygen in the day and at night in large quantities around the house, not only making the area green but also improving the air quality.

- Choosing to live in a house located in a clean environment far from industries and factories that pollute the air is one way to try and minimise our exposure to polluted air but eventually we would need to increase awareness about this in all so that we don't disrupt the inherent harmony in nature and don't pollute the environment in the first place and only then would we truly be able to have better air quality.

How to Breathe Better (Increase the Quantity of Air Breathed In)

What can we do to take in more oxygen with each breath and help the body to function as efficiently as possible? Given below are some suggestions for breathing more efficiently^{38, 39, 40}

- **Maintain a proper Posture:** The right posture enables proper breathing in the body in an efficient manner. When sitting or standing, do so comfortably (without stiffness in the body), keep the body erect and the shoulders back. Such a posture supports deep breathing with proper expansion of the chest and abdomen allowing for fullness in each breath.
- **Breathe through the nose:** When we take in air through the nose, it filters, humidifies and warms the inhaled air making it suitable for the body before it enters the lungs.
- **Live a healthy lifestyle:** Maintaining a healthy lifestyle keeps the lungs healthy too. Eat nutritious food that will nurture the body and keep it healthy and avoid habits like smoking which cause direct damage to the lungs. Inhaling secondary or second-hand smoke, dust, irritants, fragrance of artificial perfumes etc. is also harmful for the body as mentioned above.
- **Do regular exercise:** Regular exercise maintains all the body organs (including the lungs) in a state of good health and if the lungs are healthy, they will function better.
- **Wear loose and comfortable clothing:** When we wear loose fitting clothes, they allow for proper expansion/movement of the chest and abdomen

so that we can breathe comfortably and deeply. However, when we wear tight, restrictive clothes they restrict the free expansion/movement of the chest and abdomen, making the breathing shallow and less efficient.

- Practice Breath regulation exercises (e.g., pranayama): As mentioned earlier, breath regulation exercises not only help make the breathing relaxed and comfortable but also help to regulate the breath in a way that you will be able to take deeper and fuller breaths thus increasing your intake of air (oxygen) with each breath and improving the overall health of the body, simply by taking in deeper and more controlled breaths. And, with a little practice, this is possible for anyone and everyone to do and reap the benefits.

Further details about breath regulation and its benefits have been discussed in the chapter on breath regulation.

Incorporating the above, you may be able to breathe more efficiently – with this you may also notice a subtle change in your energy level – feeling less tired at the end of the day, requiring less sleep etc. – good indicators of being healthy!

Test Your Understanding

1. Take note of your breathing pattern. Is your breath pattern normal (i.e., are you breathing with the diaphragm – does your belly go outwards each time you breathe in and go inwards each time you breathe out)?

Check on your breathing pattern several times a day till the normal/right breathing pattern becomes a habit for you (you can stick notes or put an alarm on your phone etc. to remind yourself if necessary).

2. What are some of the ways in which you can improve the quality of the air you breathe? Make a program for improving the quality of the air inside your home and also that outside your home – in the vicinity of your house. Make a list of the things you plan to do to make this happen.
3. At several times during the day, take note of your breathing – is your breath silent and rhythmic at all times or heavy and jerky at times?

Can you notice a change in your breath pattern with a change in your emotions/feelings?

What can you conclude from this?

Chapter 16

Intake of Sunlight

After discussing the intake of food, water and air, let us now turn to sunlight!

The sun's rays provide warmth and light that enhance one's general feeling of well-being and stimulate the blood circulation⁴¹. But that's not all. Sunlight is available to us as a gift of nature (totally free of cost) that we can avail of and keep ourselves healthy. Yes, sunlight can be therapeutic for us if we understand how to utilise it.

Benefits of Exposure to Sunlight⁴²⁻⁴³

Regular controlled exposure to sunlight has been linked to the following impressive list of benefits:

- Boosts immunity – helps get rid of infections
- Helps form Vitamin D in the body → strengthening of bones (and muscles)
- Heals skin disorders
- Improves mood, reduces depression
- Helps set our day-night cycle (circadian rhythm) in order → Improved sleep
- Protects from inflammation
- Improves brain function
- Promotes eye health

Of the above benefits, the process of formation of vitamin D is something we may all be familiar with. Even so, this process is worth recapping here.

Formation of Vitamin D

As mentioned above, sunlight helps form Vitamin D in the body. Vitamin D

is a vitamin that is essential for the human body. It plays a crucial role in skeletal development, immune function and blood cell formation in the body and increases the calcium and phosphorus absorption from food⁴¹. Unlike most essential vitamins which we have to obtain from food, vitamin D can be synthesized in the skin through a photosynthetic process that requires sunlight. Decreased exposure to the outdoor sun results in a deficiency of Vitamin D in the human body (and this is commonly being observed today).

The rays of the Sun reaching us comprise a spectrum spanning from infrared at one end (which we don't see but feel as heat) to visible light (which we are able to see) to ultra-violet (UV) light at the other end of the spectrum (which we neither see nor feel but which has a significant role to play in the body e.g., the formation of vitamin D as mentioned above). The UV rays of the sun can further be classified into UVA, UVB and UVC rays. As sunlight passes through the atmosphere, all UVC and approximately 90% of UVB rays of the Sun are absorbed by ozone, water vapour, oxygen and carbon dioxide; therefore, the UV radiation reaching the Earth's surface is largely composed of UVA with a small UVB component⁴⁴. It is these UVB rays of the sun that help form vitamin D in the skin⁴⁵.

While it is a fact that the UVB rays of the sun help our skin to synthesise vitamin D, it is also a fact that excessive exposure to UVB rays is associated with an increased risk of various diseases such as skin cancers, cataracts etc.⁴⁶. Also, the skin can produce only a limited amount of vitamin D at a time and once this limit is reached, spending more time in the sun will not form more vitamin D beyond this limit.

So how much time should we spend in the sun so that it is sufficient to form ample vitamin D in the body and yet not too much as to cause harm? An exact answer to this question may not be possible because there are a number of factors that affect the formation of vitamin D in the body e.g. the colour of your skin, how much of your skin is exposed to the sun etc.

For instance, people with a lighter skin colour are far more susceptible to the harmful effects of the UV rays of the sun than darker skinned individuals; a person with lighter skin colour may have skin damage (sunburn, risk of cancers etc.) after merely 5-10 minutes of exposure to the intense rays of the

sun⁴⁷. For such individuals, it is said that 5 to 15 minutes of casual exposure of hands, face and arms to the mid-day sun two to three times a week in the summer is sufficient to keep their vitamin D levels high⁴¹.

On the other hand, persons with darker coloured skin (e.g., people of south Asian, African descent etc.) would need to spend a longer time in the sun to produce the same amount of vitamin D as a person with lighter coloured skin.

Similarly, how long it takes for a person's skin to burn (become red, peel) may also vary from person to person.

Thus, though we may not be able to have exact answers, some recommendations can be made based on what we do know (see below).

Other health benefits

Besides the long list of benefits mentioned above, there is some evidence of an association between regular exposure to sunlight and a decreased risk of diseases like arterial hypertension; obesity; type 2 diabetes mellitus, metabolic syndrome etc., a decreased risk of cancers including colorectal, breast, prostate, and pancreatic cancer; non-Hodgkin lymphoma; problems like non-alcoholic hepatic steatosis; multiple sclerosis; Alzheimer disease; and even several psychiatric disturbances⁴⁸.

Exposure to Sunlight – When and for How Long?

While sunlight can be extremely beneficial for the health of the body as mentioned above, we do need to understand how to make use of it in a way that we can reap all the benefits.

When we spoke about the principles of holistic human health, we saw that the body is physical in nature and exists as a part of nature; it does not exist in isolation. Therefore, it is impacted by the rest of the physical units in nature. For instance, as the sun comes up with the start of a new day, the planet starts heating up – this has an impact on plants, trees etc. The human body is no exception to all this; it is also impacted by exposure to

sunlight (sunlight for 20-30 minutes a day is not quite the same as being in the sun for hours together at a stretch!). Similarly, the human body is also impacted by the change in intensity of the sun's rays falling on the earth at different times of the day.

So, the same sunlight which could be therapeutic in the early morning hours may become extremely harmful if you expose your body to it during the hours of peak heat (10 am – 2pm). Our ancestors already knew this way back and therefore recommended exposure to the early morning sunlight (by which we can reap the benefits of the sun's rays without the harsh and harmful effects of the mid-day sun). Science today corroborates the same - that the more harmful UVB rays of the sun are at their maximal intensity between the hours of 10 am and 4 pm so it is best (as far as possible) to limit exposure to the sunlight during these hours⁴⁹.

So when should you expose your skin to the sunlight? Preferably during the early hours of the morning when the sun's rays are not so harsh or damaging – anytime between sunrise and 8 or 9am but certainly before 10am.

Solar Cooking

Not only is it beneficial to expose the skin to sunlight but it is also beneficial to cook the food we eat with the help of the warmth of sunlight (in a solar cooker)! If you have the availability of ample sunlight where you reside, you can cook foods like rice, lentils etc. in a solar cooker – this ensures the cooking of food at a very slow and gentle pace with lower heat (as compared to cooking on a gas burner), resulting in tastier and healthier foods that are far more nourishing for the body.

Hazards of too Much Sun at the Wrong Times

When UV light enters skin cells for prolonged periods, it can harm the DNA (genetic material) of the cells and this damage to the DNA leads to changes in the cells such that they start growing and dividing rapidly resulting in the formation of tumors which could even be malignant (cancerous).

Some of the health problems that have been linked to overexposure to the UV rays of the Sun are skin cancers (melanomas and non-melanomas), premature aging and other skin damage, cataracts and related damage to the eyes and suppression of the immune system⁵⁰.

So while limited exposure to the early morning sunlight is certainly beneficial for health and can be done on a regular basis, excessive exposure to sunlight especially later in the day (between 10am and 4pm) when there is a predominance of the harmful UV rays can be very damaging and should best be avoided (as mentioned above).

If you must be out in the harsh mid-day sunlight, be sure to take the following protective measures to limit the exposure of your skin to sunlight:

Protective measures from Harmful UV Rays:

- **Stay in the shade.** Limit sun exposure, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when sunlight is most intense.
- **Protect your eyes.** Choose sunglasses that protect the sides of your eyes and that guard against both UVA and UVB rays of the sun.
- **Wear Protective Clothing:** Long-sleeved shirts, pants, a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses are useful.
- **Use Extra Caution Near Water, Snow and Sand:** Water, snow and sand reflect the rays of the sun, making them more intense and increasing the risk of damage to the skin, eyes, etc...
- **Avoid sunlamps and tanning beds:** Tanning beds and sun lamps use special light bulbs that speed up tanning but also deliver harmful UV rays, increasing your risk for skin damage and cancer.
- **Use sunscreen: Apply sunscreen** 20-30 minutes before going outside especially if you plan on being in the sun for a long time or you are in a mountainous region where the sun's rays are more intense. A sunscreen with sun protective factor (SPF) 15 or higher for protection from both UVA and UVB rays of the sun may be sufficient for dark skin. For very light coloured skin (e.g., in Caucasians), a sunscreen with SPF 30 (or higher) could also be used.

Thus spending time in the sun can bring with it many benefits for us in terms of better health, provided we do so at the right time and do so judiciously.

Test Your Understanding

1. What are some of the benefits of spending time outdoors and being exposed to the early morning sunlight?
2. What is the best time in the day for exposing the body to sunlight?
3. Make a program for getting some fresh outdoor air and early morning sunlight daily e.g., by going for an early morning walk daily.

Do you notice an impact of this on the body – e.g., do you feel alert or drowsy for the rest of the day? Do you notice any impact on your mood for the rest of the day?

Write down your observations. Do this exercise daily at least for one week. What conclusions do you draw from this exercise?

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Part V

Practices and Processes for Ensuring Health in the Body - II

Chapter 17

Daily Routine ***(Including the Health Tracker)***

In the previous section you were introduced to a proposal regarding a program for health. You saw how this program can be used for maintaining health in the body by implementing the recommendations for health based on the health principles (derived from an understanding of the reality). The first part of this program for health (Intake) was then discussed in detail.

We now come to another very important part of this program for health – the daily routine i.e., what time we get up in the morning, when we go to the toilet, what are our meal times, when we sleep etc.

Program for Health - Routine (Lifestyle)

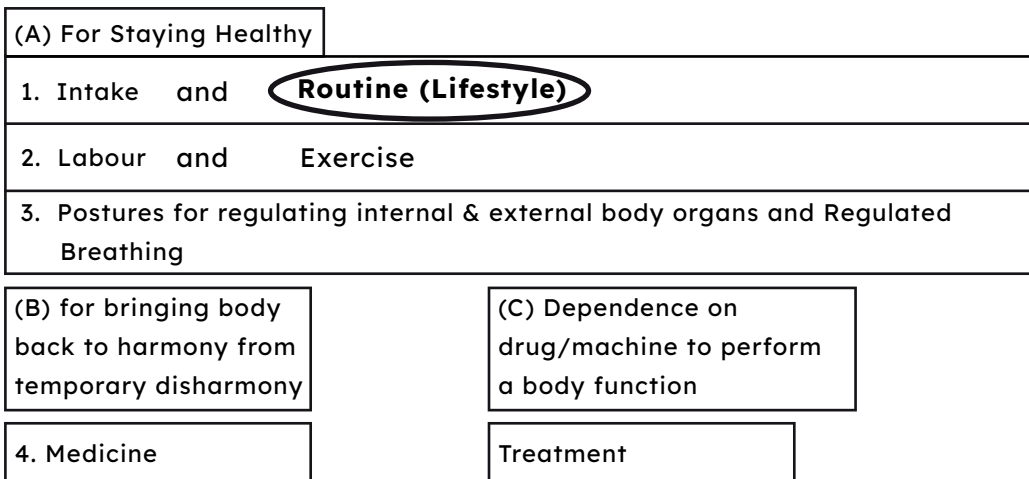


Figure - 17.1

So in the program for staying healthy (A), our daily routine is the next important thing we will be focusing on.

Have you ever noticed how the leaves on plants and trees seem to ‘open up’ as the sun comes up and tend to ‘close’ when the sun goes down; how birds wake up and start chirping at the crack of dawn? In fact, if you look around, you’ll see that everything around you behaves a certain way at a particular time of the day or night. If you recall, we had mentioned that, though we may not be aware, the human body is a material unit that follows the material laws of nature. What this means is that just like everything else in the environment, your body also responds to the sunlight (different times of day) and the darkness (night time) in a definite way.

If we understand this, take the cues from nature and synchronise our waking up, eating, being active, sleeping etc. with the natural rhythms, we can keep the body in harmony (good health) almost effortlessly.

Daily Routine - in Harmony with Nature (Circadian Rhythm)

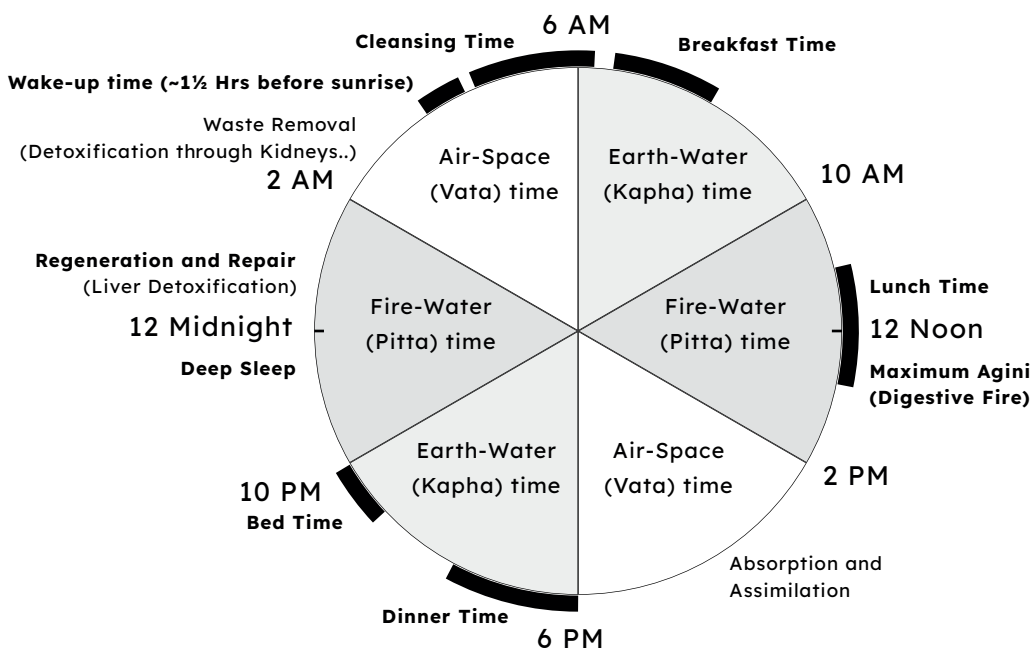


Figure - 17.2

The diagram above illustrates a daily routine in synchronisation with the patterns of nature. We shall look at this in a little more detail and try to

understand the significance of the various processes going on in the body at specific times of the day and night. We will also try to understand logically, the answers to questions like - why is waking up at a particular time so important; why is it important to go to the toilet in the morning, how is eating at a particular time linked to better digestion of the food consumed, why should one sleep early at night.... and many such questions you may have.

Waking Up Before Sunrise

You may be familiar with your mother or grandmother insisting that you wake up early in the morning. You may also have heard the statement ‘Early to bed and early to rise makes a man/woman healthy, wealthy and wise!’

“So what’s the big deal if you wake up later in the day?” you might ask. Is there any real advantage to waking up early? Why bother with trying to wake up early, especially when you’ve been up studying till late at night. You can always catch up with the morning activities later in the day.... Not true!!

Here’s what waking up early in the morning before sunrise does for you (don’t just take our word for it, try and experiment with this for a few days before drawing your own conclusions):

1. You wake up fresh and alert (provided you’ve had a good night’s rest the previous night) (for more details on sleep check out ‘sleep’ further ahead)

Make the effort to wake up early for two or three consecutive days (ensure that you go to bed early the previous night). Notice anything? Now perhaps go back to sleeping till late for a day. See any change? You may notice that when you’re up early, you wake up fresh and alert while when you wake up late you tend to feel groggy, lethargic and tired.

2. You have easier and more complete evacuation of the bowels (as also all natural urges)

Once you start waking up early and having an early bowel movement, you’ll be able to notice how much more light and active you feel. You will

also be able to notice the sharp contrast on days that you don't have an early bowel movement – you may find that you feel heavy, dull and sluggish. Nature also supports having a bowel movement earlier in the day – gut activity increases soon after waking up in the morning and this increase in gut activity is associated with an increased blood flow in the region of the gut - all this helps one to have an easy and more complete bowel movement^{1,2} (as discussed in 'intake of water', you can also drink some warm water at this time and it will aid the natural process of the bowel movement).

3. You're more alert and active throughout the day

The alertness and freshness we've been talking about lingers for the entire day allowing you to be more active and yet feel less tired at the end of the day!

4. Calm, quiet and peaceful time – ideal for introspection as also for study

If you're in the habit of studying till late at night, you may feel that's the only time when you're able to concentrate undisturbed. However, if you give a trial to studying at dawn, perhaps you will realise that at this time you not only are undisturbed (as most people are still asleep) but also that you tend to grasp and retain what you study faster and better. This time of day has been associated with better concentration and memory.

Also, this is your own time – time to plan the day, to study, meditate, reflect and introspect. The calm and freshness of the air at this time is extremely conducive for such practices that can help you deal with day-to-day situations that may currently be leading to a build-up of stress within you.

5. Synchronises the internal clock (circadian rhythm with the natural rhythm of day and night)

When you wake up before dawn every day, your body starts getting aligned to the natural day and night rhythm. This helps to be active during the day, getting tired by nightfall and sleeping better at night. When the body is thus aligned to the natural day and night rhythm, all body

processes like those of digestion, excretion/elimination, regeneration etc. work smoothly and efficiently.

6. Better health and longer life span for the body

When body processes thus work more efficiently, a natural outcome of this is better health and longevity.

7. Better mental health

Waking up early in the morning, besides having all these beneficial effects on body health, also impacts the mind/mental health of an individual in a very positive way. This is the first and foremost step of your daily routine that can help you optimise your energy thus maximising your physical and mental capabilities.

In fact, if you get in the routine of going to bed early and not sleeping during the day, you'll find that you naturally come awake early in the morning, not only well rested but even without the help of clocks or mobile 'phone alarms.

So what's the best time to wake-up?

In the Indian tradition it is said that the ideal time to wake up is in the 'brahma muhurta' or ~ 1 ½ hours before sunrise. How this calculation works^{3,4} is that the night is said to have 15 muhurtas and each muhurta is 48 minutes long so waking up in the Brahma Muhurta means waking up in the penultimate (last but one) muhurta of the night or, to be precise, 1 hour and 36 minutes (48+48 minutes) before sunrise. What this means is that if sunrise for you is at 06.00 am, then the ideal time for you to wake-up would be between 04.24 and 05.12 am. The time at which the sun rises will differ from place to place hence the ideal time to wake-up will vary accordingly, depending on where one lives. Initially, waking up this early may take some effort and getting used to but very soon it will become effortless and seem like the most natural thing.

What's special about brahma muhurta?

Research tells us that at this time (prior to dawn), nascent oxygen is available in the atmosphere⁵ which has the ability to combine with the haemoglobin

in the blood more readily. This is what leads to an increase in our immunity and makes us more energetic and active when we wake up early.

Scientific studies have also shown that children who rise early are more active than those that wake up late⁶ and that waking up late messes up our daily rhythm leading to tiredness, impaired alertness and performance, disorientation, gastrointestinal problems, loss of appetite, and inappropriate time of defecation².

So now that you know the significance of early rising, the next time your mother or grandmother tells you to wake up early, don't just shrug it off! You know better – jump out of bed and into the start of a beautiful day!

Observing Yourself and the Body on Waking Up

As soon as you wake up, you may be able to notice that thoughts are going on within you. Something or other is constantly going on in your imagination. Try to look at the imagination – to look at the thoughts; to try to see the feeling behind the thoughts. Do you feel calm and comfortable or tense and agitated?

After observing the Self for a few minutes, you can then shift your attention to what's happening in the body. There will be several signals from the body that can tell you a lot about the various body processes e.g., if the food from the previous day has been digested well or is causing some flatulence, stomach pain etc. indicating indigestion; if the body appears relaxed and well rested or are the muscles tense and so on.

You need not spend a whole lot of time on this – 5-10 minutes should be sufficient. Let us talk a little more about how to do this.

Few Suggestions:

1. Wake up before sunrise.
2. Sit in any comfortable posture (e.g., cross legged or in 'Sukhasana')
3. You may keep your eyes open or closed and start observing.

4. Observe your thoughts.
5. Just observe without passing judgement, without trying to change what you observe
6. Now observe the body

What to observe/pay attention to:

1. Observe what is going on in the mind. Observe your thoughts – what are you thinking at this moment? Just observe – don't try to resist any thoughts. Just keep watching and allow them to come and go. Watch patiently until they die on their own.
2. Try to observe the feeling at the base of the thoughts.
3. Now observe if you feel rested and relaxed or tired and tense? Have you slept well?
4. Does the body appear to be light and ready to act on your command or does it seem to be sluggish and heavy?
5. Do a quick mental scan of the body – what is the status of the body? Any aches or pains, joint stiffness etc.?
6. Observe your breath pattern. Are you breathing the right way (abdomen coming up on inspiration and going down on expiration)?
7. How are the various body parts functioning? For instance, does the food you ate the night before seem to have been fully digested or do you have residual symptoms like stomach pain or headache perhaps due to gas, heartburn due to acidity etc.

Bringing about a conscious change:

Reflect on your imagination – what is going on within you. Observe your thoughts. Try to observe the feeling at the base of the thoughts; observe with this feeling, are you comfortable within or uncomfortable within – are you calm and peaceful or agitated and disturbed? Based on these feelings, you have some thoughts and based on the thoughts you have certain expectations regarding the outside world.

With this imagination that is going on within, continuously, observe that you interact with the body and the world outside only sometimes. So, while your imagination is going on continuously, your interaction with the body (and the world outside) is only occasionally - as you think necessary.

For example, when you come awake but are still in bed, you may notice that you are busy with your imagination. The body is still and lying in bed but your imagination is very active. You may be thinking about all that is likely to happen later in the day after you get out of bed and get ready, go to college, to work etc. and you may be busy with this imagination for more than an hour before you finally interact with the body momentarily, as needed - to give instructions to the body to get out of bed, wash the face, drink water etc.

Now, reflect on the body - observe the signals, the sensations taking place in the body. Reflect on what is or isn't going right in the body (i.e., on the harmony/disharmony in the body) and observe what instructions you are giving to the body - the instructions you are giving to the body, are they correcting the disharmony or making it worse??

Observe what is naturally acceptable to you - to keep the body healthy or unhealthy? To take responsibility for the body or to merely indulge in sensations (e.g., taste) without taking any responsibility for nurturing, protecting and rightly utilising the body? When you have the feeling that is naturally acceptable to you, you take responsibility for the body and give the body the right instructions. The body follows these instructions (it has no choice but to do so) and this leads to health in the body.

Just a few minutes of this self-observation in the morning can help you be calmer, more relaxed, more organised, alert and energetic for the rest of the day. Try it out for a few days and note any changes you can perceive.

Cleansing Processes

Once awake and having observed the Self and the body by the Self, it is time to aid the body in its cleansing processes.

As mentioned earlier, the body has natural processes that cleanse it. These cleansing processes are a part of the body's natural self-organisation. If we understand these cleansing processes and aid (assist) them, it helps to keep the body in harmony. When we do not understand these processes and keep violating or going against them, the body goes into disharmony. So let us understand these processes of cleansing that are naturally taking place in the body and how we can assist them to keep the body in harmony (health).

Cleansing of the Bowels

After waking up and observing the signals in the body, observing the instructions you are giving to the body (knowingly or unknowingly) and after observing whether your thoughts are in accordance with your natural acceptance, it is time to pay attention to the natural urges of the body like bowel movements, urination etc.

The Urge to have a Bowel movement:^{7,8}

Ever wondered how and when you get the urge to have a bowel movement? To understand this, it would help to understand a little bit about the process of digestion, absorption and the formation of the waste matter.

After food is digested (starting from the mouth, continuing in the stomach and ending in the small intestine), nourishment from the food is absorbed in the small intestine. Most of the digestion and absorption is complete by the time the 'food' leaves the small intestine. What's left is whatever was not digested or absorbed as food. This moves further down the gut into the large intestine or colon. Here in the large intestine, the water and electrolytes (salts) required by the body are absorbed from this remaining matter and whatever is indigestible is fermented by bacteria. Now what remains is waste matter that the body has no use for (faeces/stool). Thus, it is in the large intestine or colon that the stool is formed and stored.

The muscles in the colon contract in waves (peristalsis) to move the stool further down towards the rectum. When enough stool moves to the rectum, it leads to the stretching of the rectal walls and this causes the urge to have a bowel movement. Once this urge is there, one may or may not act on it. If one acts on the urge, one can voluntarily apply pressure by straining down and evacuate the stool from the rectum and out through the anus.

How often to have a bowel movement and when's the right time?

The right time to have a bowel movement is after waking-up and spending a few minutes interacting with the body as discussed above. Why is this the right time? Because nature seems to have intended it to be this way and there are a lot of benefits to this as listed below.

It has been shown that the muscle activity in the colon (i.e., the colonic contraction/peristalsis) increases significantly when one wakes up in the morning⁹. This aids the process of having a bowel movement. Though science does not yet have a full answer to why and how the increased activity in the colon takes place on waking up in the morning, one can consider it to be another of the body processes that reflect the body's self-organisation (see the chapter on 'Universal health Principles').

Thus, having a bowel movement soon after waking up early in the morning is ideal; even two bowel movements a day (one in the morning and one in the evening) are normal. In fact, studies have shown that while the majority of people tend to have a bowel movement in the morning, a smaller number also tend to have one in the evening¹⁰.

How long should it take to have a bowel movement?

You should not have to spend more than 5-7 minutes in the toilet to have a bowel movement^{11, 12}. If it is taking you longer, check if you're doing all the right things to regularise your bowel movements as given below.

Significance of regular and timely bowel movements:

Having regular bowel movements is a sign of a healthy digestive system⁷. It has many benefits:

1. A better (more complete) evacuation of the bowels

An early morning bowel movement leads to more complete evacuation of the stool as a result of two associated processes that naturally aid this:

- a. An increased rhythmic movement of muscles (peristalsis) in the colon soon after waking up in the morning
- b. A natural increase in blood circulation to the large intestines in the early morning

If one waits till later in the day, one has to have a bowel movement without the aid of these two processes. Also, since water gets absorbed from the stool collected in the large intestine, the stool becomes drier (remember it's not just outside that it's hot- the heat attribute in the body is also increasing as the day progresses). Because of this, the dry stool gets hardened and does not get evacuated as easily and this leads to an incomplete evacuation.

2. Less risk of constipation

If one becomes habituated to regular bowel movements in the morning, there is a far lower chance of having constipation (difficulty in passing motion that is usually associated with the hardening of the stool).

On the contrary, irregular and untimely attempts at evacuation lead to the hardening of stool and incomplete bowel emptying as mentioned above, leading to the accumulation of stool in the colon. If this keeps happening frequently, over time it is associated with problems like high blood pressure as discussed below.

3. Less risk of lifestyle disorders (e.g., high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease etc.)

Did you ever notice what happens to food (e.g., fruit/vegetables) when left outside in the hot sun during the day? You will notice that it dries up -as if the water has been sucked out of it and it seems to shrivel up and lose its freshness.

The environment inside your body is not that much different – in fact, it's not just hot but hot and humid inside the bowels (almost like a tropical rain forest!). And in hot and humid weather, things rot easily.

Even the waste matter, if not removed from the body in a timely manner, tends to rot and decay and the longer it stays in the colon, the more chance there is of toxins from this waste matter getting recirculated into the blood stream. This has been associated with high blood pressure and cardiovascular ailments (frequency of bowel movement is inversely associated with prevalence of hypertension and cardiovascular mortality^{13,14}).

What you can do to regularise your bowel movements:

If you find that you're not able to have a bowel movement in the morning with ease, rather than spending more time in the bathroom or straining in the attempt to have a bowel movement, make sure you're doing some of the following things that will help ease the process:

1. Intake of fibre foods

Consume ample foods that are rich in fibre (whole grains, fruit and vegetables)

Avoid heavily processed foods like Maida (white flour), bakery goods, flour that is ground very fine rather than coarse etc. These tend to stick to the walls of the intestines and are not easily excretable by the body.

2. Intake of ample water

Consume a sufficient amount of water in the course of the day, preferably more in the first half of the day. This helps in the digestion of the food you have consumed and also helps in the ease of movement of the remains down the intestinal tract.

Avoid drinking too much water just before or after the meal as this dilutes the digestive juices, thus interfering with the process of digestion.

3. Drink a glass or two of warm water soon after you wake up

When you do this, you aid the natural tendency of the body to have

a bowel movement in the morning – warm water helps stimulate the peristaltic movements in the intestines.

4. Regularise your sleep –wake cycle

Even as you sleep, the small and large intestines work together to process whatever food is left over from the previous day so that you wake up fresh and have the urge for a bowel movement ~ in about half an hour after waking up. You can aid the body in doing this efficiently by having dinner early (by about 7pm) and going to bed early (by about 10 pm).

Sleep disturbances disrupt the internal clock in the body and interfere with the colonic activity that normally occurs soon after waking up. So wake up early in the morning and sleep well in time (by 10 pm). When you do this, you will find that you naturally get the urge to have a bowel movement in the morning soon after waking up.

Avoid late night dinners and staying up till late at night – this not only makes it harder to wake up early because you're not fully rested but it also disrupts the entire sleep –wake cycle and all the body processes linked with it (including the bowel movement).

5. Include some exercise in your daily routine

Daily exercise is extremely beneficial in regularising the bowels. If you're able to work with nature (gardening, planting trees, growing crops etc.) you will find it very useful. You could also combine this with a warm-up comprising some light stretching exercises, yoga or walking, running, jogging etc.

6. Try using an Indian style toilet

Using an Indian style toilet involves squatting (sitting on the heels) when attempting a bowel movement. In this position, the knees are at a higher level than the hips and there is a greater angle of flexion at the hip joint (as compared to when one sits on a western style toilet seat). This aligns the rectal-anal passage in a straight line such that it becomes easier to have a bowel movement without straining. Hence this is the ideal position to use when attempting a bowel movement.

If you don't have this option and need to sit on a western style toilet seat, you can place your feet on a foot stool ~ 20-30 cm (8-10 inches) high while sitting on the toilet seat. This increases the angle of flexion at the hip bringing the body to a position closer to the ideal position of squatting. You can also lean forward and hold onto your ankles. In this position there is a natural and gentle increase in pressure in the abdomen without having to strain^{15,16}.

7. When you have the urge to have a bowel movement, don't suppress it

Ignoring or suppressing the urge to have a bowel movement is one of the main reasons for constipation and irregular bowel habits (see 'what happens if you suppress the urge to have a bowel movement' below).

8. Pay attention (yes, even when in the toilet for a bowel movement)

Paying attention is important here too!

Avoid keeping books, magazines etc. in the toilet. This makes you end up spending a lot of time in the toilet but to no advantage - the reading material distracts the mind and ends up shifting your focus from the task at hand, thus interfering with and hindering the process.

Hygiene after a bowel movement:

Needless to say, that once the natural urge to pass urine or have a bowel movement has been addressed, it is extremely important to maintain hygiene so wash the area and the hands well.

What happens if you suppress the urge to have a bowel movement?

If one attempts to voluntarily stop the urge to have a bowel movement, one can. And it's ok to do this one odd time (e.g., when there is no bathroom available to you) but it's not a good idea to make a habit of this. Here's why:

When a certain quantity of stool reaches the rectum, that's when you get the urge to have a bowel movement. However, if you suppress this urge, the stool

is pushed back up from the rectum to the colon by reverse peristalsis¹⁷. This stool will now stay in the colon till the next large peristaltic wave attempts to again move it down into the rectum. While the stool stays stored in the colon, water is again absorbed from it making it drier and harder¹⁸.

This harder and drier stool causes difficulty when a bowel movement is attempted (constipation) and if the urge to have a bowel movement is suppressed frequently, one becomes habitually constipated.

Along with constipation come other associated problems e.g., the formation of a 'fissure' (the tearing of the tender skin around the anus due to the hardened stool) resulting in pain and the passing of blood in the stool¹⁹. Constipation also leads to a tendency to push when you attempt a bowel movement which results in the swelling up of veins around the anus ('haemorrhoids' or 'piles') causing pain and bleeding²⁰.

Habitual constipation and impaction of stool in the colon is also associated with the collection of urine in the bladder and difficulty passing urine, often resulting in urinary tract infections.

Another common problem which may occur but which one may not become aware of is that the repeated suppression of the urge to have a bowel movement makes the rectum less sensitive to the collection of stool²¹. What this means is that signals from the rectum informing that it is time to 'go' are no longer sent (i.e., you don't even feel the urge to have a bowel movement) until a much larger quantity of stool collects, making the problem worse.

All of these problems can be avoided simply by paying attention to the signals from the body (in this case, the urge for a bowel movement) and acting on them and if you don't have much success, ensuring that you're taking care of the eight steps listed above. These are bound to help regularise your bowels without the need for medication.

Cleansing of the Mouth and Oral Cavity (Oral Hygiene)

This is another cleansing process that forms a part of our regular daily routine.

Oral Hygiene includes:

Cleansing of the teeth & gums

Cleansing of the tongue and

Cleansing of the entire oral cavity

Cleansing of teeth and gums:

We all have bacteria that are naturally present in the mouth. By themselves these bacteria may do no harm but if food particles remain stuck in the teeth after we eat, these food particle remnants mix with the bacteria to form a sticky layer referred to as 'plaque'. The more sugary and sticky sweet foods we eat, the more the bacteria multiply and the more acid they produce.

If this plaque layer is not removed from the teeth, the acid in it erodes the minerals from the enamel (the hard outer layer of the teeth). This is what leads to cavities or holes through which the bacteria and acid then erode the deeper layers of the teeth. When plaque develops under the gums and on the roots of the teeth, it can also lead to gingivitis or gum disease and a breakdown of the bones supporting the teeth.

Eventually the plaque gets calcified, hardened and discoloured forming what is known as 'tartar'. While the plaque layer is soft and can easily be removed as it forms, tartar is much harder and a lot more difficult to remove.

All these problems of cavities in the teeth, gum disease etc. can be prevented by regular cleaning of the teeth and gums with regular removal of the collection of plaque.

Besides preventing infections and cavities in the teeth, regular cleansing also removes other dirt from the teeth, tongue and mouth and gets rid of foul odour in the mouth leaving one feeling fresh.

How often should you clean your teeth?

It is advisable to clean the teeth at least twice a day -once in the morning after taking care of the natural urges and once after having food at night, before going to bed. While most people do clean the teeth in the morning, many don't see the significance of doing so in the night.

The fact is that cleaning the teeth at night is even more important because once you go to sleep, the mouth remains closed all night and if food particles are remaining in the mouth when you go to bed, the bacteria in the mouth will have a whole lot of material to attack and will be active all night in the closed mouth.

What to use for cleaning the teeth – Toothpaste or Herbs?

While commercially available toothpaste is the one that is commonly used by most for cleaning of the teeth and several brands of toothpastes are available in the market, many contain chemical additives (e.g., fluoride, triclosan, saccharin, carrageenan, aspartame, parabens, sodium lauryl sulphate (SLS), propylene glycol etc., to name a few)^{22, 23, 24, 25, 26}.

These chemicals have been scientifically shown to be harmful when used in excess. For instance, the chemicals used in teeth ‘whitening’ toothpastes may harm not only the enamel of teeth but also the soft tissues, resulting in possible irritation of the oral mucosa, ulceration and circumoral dermatitis²⁷ (rash on the skin around the mouth).

Most often chemical additives to toothpastes have no significant role in cleaning the teeth and are added as preservatives or merely to make the tooth paste look attractive, prevent liquefaction, generate foam etc. so while toothpaste is convenient to use, there may be some questions regarding its safety and utility as a teeth cleanser.

Use of herbs for teeth cleansing:

There are various natural herbs that have traditionally been used for cleansing of the oral cavity and for strengthening and protecting the teeth and gums. Many of these options are available to us even today, for example neem twigs, Nimba (*Azadirachta indica*, Karnja (*Pongamia pinnata*)), Madhuka (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) and Khadira (*Acacia catechu*) to name a few^{28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33}.

Why use herbs? Do they really work?

These are some questions that may come to your mind. Scientific evidence

tells us that there are several advantages to using such natural substances for oral hygiene. Research has shown that the twigs of the many natural herbs that were traditionally used as chewing sticks in India (in lieu of toothpaste) have medicinal and even anti-carcinogenic properties and that they help prevent several oral and systemic diseases³⁴.

In 1998, Venugopal et al studied and analysed a total of 2000 children (in the 1-14 year age group) in Mumbai for the prevalence of dental caries. They found that the children who were using Neem twigs for cleansing of the teeth and oral cavity were less affected by dental caries²⁵. This is because neem has anti-bacterial and anti- microbial properties.

Besides preventing plaque and dental caries, chewing of neem twigs can have several other advantages – it helps maintain the alkaline levels of saliva, can treat sore throats, mouth ulcers and inflamed and swollen gums providing relief. It also whitens the teeth and relieves toothache. In fact, the varied benefits of neem have now been recognised the world over. And the biggest advantage of chewing on neem twigs is that, being used in its natural form, it has no side-effects!

How to use the herbal twig for cleaning teeth^{35,36,37}

Holding the washed twig in your hand like a brush, chew on ~ one inch of one end of the twig. Keep chewing on it till its fibres separate and become almost like the bristles of a tooth brush. This will take a while so you can go about doing other things while chewing on the twig.

Once the fibres have separated out, the twig can be rubbed on the teeth and gums much like a tooth brush, taking care to rub gently so as not to hurt the gums while rubbing. Each tooth can be scrubbed individually in this manner.

Powders that can be used for cleansing of teeth:

Just as herb twigs can be used directly, the powdered form of many herbs can also be used for cleaning of teeth e.g., powdered Saindhava (rock salt) mixed with oil, powder of burnt coconut shell mixed with a powder of lavang (clove) and rock salt, powder of Trikatu—a combination of Shunthi (Zingiber

officinale/dry ginger powder), Maricha (Piper nigrum/black pepper) and Pippali (Piper longum/long pepper) mixed with honey or a powder of Tejovati (Zanthoxylum alatum Roxb./toothache tree)^{38, 39}. These can be procured from any local grocery store or in prepared form, from an Ayurvedic store.

Powders for cleansing of gums

After the cleaning of teeth, the gums can also be cleaned by rubbing them with similar herbal powders, taking care not to hurt the gums. One example of such a powder made from a combination of herbs is—

- i. A fine powder made of 10 herbs namely -
 - Vapya (Kustha-Saussurealappa)
 - Trikatu i.e. Shunthi (Zingiber officinale), Maricha (Piper nigrum) and pippali (piper longum),
 - Triphala i.e. Haritaki (Terminalia chebula), Vibhitaki (Terminalia bellerica) and Amalaki (Emblica officinalis) and
 - Trijataka (cinnamon, cardamom and Cinnamomum tamala)

This powder can be taken mixed with honey⁴⁰

Cleaning (scraping) of the tongue^{41, 42, 43, 44}

This is another traditional method of cleansing that may or may not be widely practised today but has several benefits:

Regular scraping of the tongue helps remove food particle remnants that get deposited at the root of the tongue after eating. When these food particle remnants are removed and the tongue is clean, there is less chance of bacteria acting on food remnants and causing diseases of the tongue, teeth and oral cavity.

Prevents foul odour of the mouth – As tongue cleaning removes food particle remnants, preventing bacterial action on them, it helps prevent bad mouth odour.

May lead to enhanced taste of food – Since tongue cleaning removes the

food remnants stuck on the tongue (and on the taste buds of the tongue), it allows more of the clean surface of the taste buds to come in contact with the food you eat, leading to an enhanced sensation of taste. So you may find the same food tastier and appreciate it more, after cleaning the tongue!

What to use for scraping: Tongue scrapers are freely available. Care should be taken to select ones that are curved and not sharp edged. Choose a tongue scraper made of metal (e.g., gold, silver, copper, steel or brass). Avoid those made of plastic.

The soft twig that you used like a tooth brush can also be used to scrape the tongue. Using any of these materials, one can gently scrape the tongue.

How often to scrape: Like it is important to clean the teeth twice a day, it is also important to scrape the tongue twice daily – once in the morning and once at night before going to bed.

Cleansing of the mouth (oral cavity):

The entire oral cavity can be cleansed with the help of a swishing around of oil or medicated liquid in the mouth – a process termed “Oil pulling”. Oil pulling is another traditional practice with many benefits^{45, 46, 47}.

Benefits of oil pulling (what it does for you):

The most important thing that oil pulling does is that it helps get rid of harmful bacteria in the mouth. This one thing leads to the many other benefits of reducing plaque, tartar and dental caries (cavities in the teeth). By decreasing inflammation in the mouth, it also improves the health of the gums, preventing gingivitis. As a result of all these, it decreases and prevents bad breath!

It is a simple process – take a tablespoon of oil into the mouth and swish it around in the mouth for about 15-20 minutes, much like a mouth wash. Then spit the oil out and rinse the mouth with plain water. The oil you use could be sesame oil, coconut oil or any other natural oil or you could use a medicated oil e.g., ‘Arimedadi taila’.

Oil pulling can be done after taking care of the natural urges and cleaning of teeth and tongue in the morning and again at night before going to bed.

So, this is a procedure that is simple, extremely beneficial and worth adding to your daily routine.

Cleansing of the Sense Organs

Just as it is recommended to clean the tongue daily, it is also recommended to cleanse the organs pertaining to all the five senses daily:

Cleaning of tongue (pertaining to the sense of taste) – discussed in ‘Oral hygiene’ above

Cleansing of the eyes (pertaining to the sense of vision)

Cleansing of the nose (pertaining to the sense of smell)

Cleansing of the ears (pertaining to the sense of hearing) and

Cleansing of the skin (pertaining to the sense of touch)

We will look at these one by one.

Cleansing of the Eyes

We tend to put our eyes through a lot of rough use daily leading to strain on the eyes e.g., working long hours in front of computer screens, looking at our mobile ‘phones throughout the day, reading in poor light, watching TV while in a bad posture (e.g., when lying down) etc. Do we also think about taking care of the eyes on a daily basis?

The eyes can be cleansed by gently splashing cool water on the face while keeping the eyes open. Our traditional wisdom tells us that daily bathing of the eyes with cool water in the morning while at the same time holding a mouthful of water in the mouth is highly beneficial for the eyes. This not only cleanses the eyes but also improves the eyesight. Care should be taken not to use very cold or very hot water for this.

You can fill your mouth with water and while holding it there, gently splash first one eye and then the other alternately a few times with cool water.

Once done with the eye cleansing, spit out the water in the mouth.

Eye cups can also be used for bathing the eyes.

Crushed Triphala – Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*), Vibhitaki (*Terminalia bellerica*) and Amalaki (*Emblica officinalis*) soaked in water can also be used as an eye wash (after straining through a fine muslin cloth).

Besides daily cleansing of the eyes, there are several other things we can do to protect and safeguard the eyes from the ill effects of the wear and tear and strain we regularly put the eyes through.

What you can add to your daily routine to ensure better health for your eyes:

Awareness of the right posture and lighting when reading: It is important to sit in an upright posture when reading, keeping the book at a constant distance of ~30-45 cms from the eyes. If you read when lying down, you have to hold the book above your face. Not only does this cause eye strain because the eyes have to focus upwards but also, because it is difficult for the hands to hold the book very steadily, there is bound to be constant shifting and subtle movement of the book causing the eyes to have to keep readjusting their focus, leading to more eye strain.

For the same reason, it's not a good idea to read when in a moving vehicle.

When it comes to lighting, the room should be well illuminated and, ideally, the light should fall on the book from above and behind and for the majority who are right-handed, from above, behind and to the left (so that the shadow of one's own hand does not fall on the book or writing material and interfere with the vision).

Blinking the eyes intermittently: If the eyes have to remain in focus for long periods (e.g., when reading for long hours or focusing on mobile 'phone or computer screens for long stretches) it is particularly straining for the eyes. In order to relax the eyes and decrease the strain on them, you can blink the eyes every now and then. It also helps to look up at something distant from time to time especially nature. When you look into the distance, the eye muscles that were focusing on the book or screen get a chance to

relax and looking at nature e.g., the stars, trees etc. soothes the eyes.

Doing Eye exercises regularly: When you do eye exercises regularly, the eye muscles get stretched and exercised, enhancing your vision and safeguarding the health of the eyes.

What to avoid:

Avoid watching movies and television excessively: Besides limiting the time you spend watching TV, here are some things to note when you do watch:

Avoid watching the TV in darkness as this puts strain on the eyes. Instead, ensure that there is sufficient lighting in the room.

Lower the brightness – Lower the brightness of your television screen to bring it closer to the brightness of natural lighting so your eyes don't have to strain too much.

Lower the contrast – When you lower the contrast on your television screen, it decreases the strain on your eyes as they don't need to keep re-adjusting to the various colours (colors and brightness are closer together)

Avoid sitting too close to the screen – Being too close to the television screen for a prolonged period results in eye strain and fatigue. So, ensure that your TV screen is at a reasonable distance from you.

Avoid glare – Bright light opposite the TV screen (e.g., from an open window) can cause a glare on the screen and resulting eye strain so is best avoided.

Avoid stepping out in an inclement environment without protection:

If you're going to be out in the hot sun for long durations, remember to protect yourself with an umbrella and sun glasses. Similarly, if you need to be in an environment with excessive breeze, smoke, dust etc. (e.g., where large machines may be working and raising a lot of fine dust), wear some eye protection like eye glasses. When driving a scooter or bike also, it is advisable to protect the eyes with the help of glasses or a helmet shield.

Avoid gazing at the sun and extremely bright lights: Gazing at the sun can lead to damage to the eyes and even blindness. Even observing the sun

in the presence of an eclipse can be harmful to the eyes.

Looking at bright lights like those seen during lightning or during the process of welding is also best avoided. If done frequently or for long durations, such bright lights can harm the eyes.

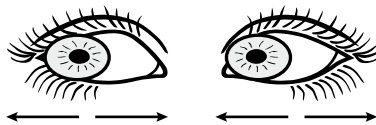
Some common Eye Exercises⁴⁸

The eye exercises given below are all to be done keeping the head and neck erect. There should be no movement of head or neck – only the eyes are to be moved.

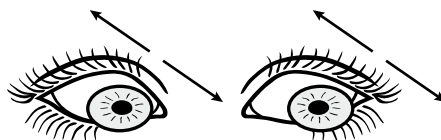
Movement of eyes **up and down** – Look up and then look down; look up, look down... Do this 4 times



Movement of eyes **side to side** – Look to the extreme left, then to extreme right (keeping the head facing forward all the while)...do this 4 times.

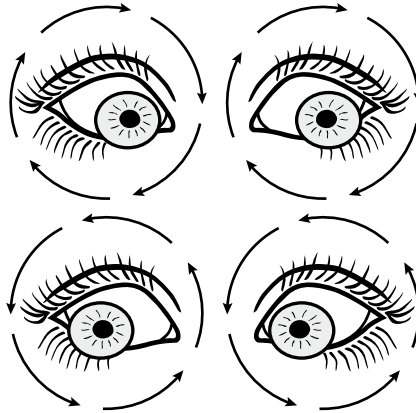


Movement of eyes up and down angularly – Facing forward, look towards the upper left side; now look at the lower right side...do this 4 times.



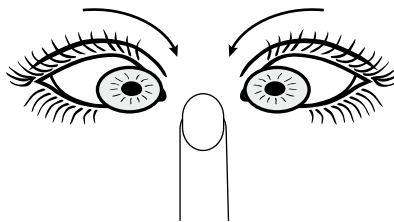
Continuing to face forward, look towards the upper right side; now look towards the lower left side....do this 4 times.

Circular movement of eyes – Continuing to face forward and without moving head or neck, move eyes in a clockwise direction all around. Do this 4 times.



Now, in the same way, move the eyes all around in an anti-clockwise direction. Do this 4 times.

Focusing the eyes far and near – Hold your index finger in front of the eyes and keep your focus on the tip of the finger while moving it away from you, stretching your arm out in front of you. When your arm is fully outstretched, start bringing the finger back towards you slowly, keeping your focus on the tip of the finger all the while till the finger is as close as possible – you will now be looking medially (towards the bridge of your nose). Do this 4-8 times.



During the exercises and in fact all through the day, frequent blinking of the eyes is beneficial. It keeps the eyes relaxed and well hydrated.

Cleansing of Eyes with Collyrium/Eye-Salve:

What is Collyrium?

Collyrium is a paste or powder that has traditionally been in use for the cleansing and protection of the eyes. This has been used not just in India but also in many other traditional societies like those of Africa, the middle-east and south Asia.

It was traditionally made at home by grinding of specific pebbles or with the help of specific herbs. The powder form is referred to as 'surma' while in the form of a paste (made from the powder) it is referred to as 'kajal' ('kohl' in English).

While the pure form of collyrium is not only cleansing and soothing but also extremely beneficial for the eyes, one needs to be wary of the many commercially available cosmetic forms which may have several additives/impurities that could be harmful to the eyes.

Due to its medicinal properties, Collyrium is also commercially available in the form of several ophthalmic eyewash lotions.

Few benefits of Collyrium application^{49, 50, 51, 52:}

It helps cleanse the eyes removing sticky, viscid secretions, dust and other impurities that may accumulate in the eyes from time to time.

It is also very soothing to the eyes; it helps alleviate burning and itching sensations and all such local discomfort in the eyes.

When and how to apply Collyrium:

In the morning after cleansing of the eyes and after a bath is a good time to apply collyrium.

Using a clean finger or metal applicator made of gold, silver or copper and with blunt ends⁵³, the collyrium powder or paste can be applied to the inside of the eyelids. Ensure that the collyrium and the applicator, both are sterile.

Cleansing of the Nose (Nasal Instillation)

Besides being the sense organ of smell, it is the nose through which we constantly breathe air in and out. The air we breathe in may not be very conducive to being taken in by us, as is, e.g., it may be too dry or too cold as compared to the environment inside the human body; it may also contain dust and other impurities.

Here too, it is the nose that helps to warm, humidify and purify the air that we take in making it more suitable for the body. The nasal passages have tiny hair like 'cilia' that trap dust etc. from the air, preventing it from entering the lungs. This dust and dirt collect in the mucous secretions of the nose and can readily be removed by blowing out the nose.

What is Nasal instillation?

Nasal instillation is the administering of oil or other medicated liquid through the nose. Why administer through the nose?

In the anterior or front part of the nasal septum (between the two nostrils), is a collection of five arteries that supply the nasal cavity. So any medication administered through the nose diffuses very quickly and efficiently through the nasal mucosa and into the circulation via these arteries.

Besides this, the nose is very intricately connected with many of the organs and tissues in the head. It is connected to the ears through the Eustachian tubes, to the eyes through the nasolacrimal ducts, to the throat through the nasopharynx and to the brain via the olfactory nerves that pass through the cribriform plate at the roof of the nose.

Since the nose is anatomically related to so many organs and tissues, any medication administered into the nose has the potential to impact all these tissues and the diseases afflicting them.

Benefits of Nasal Instillation^{54,55}:

Since the nose is constantly exposed to the external environment, making it

susceptible to the drying effect of air, nasal instillation of oil helps prevent the nose from drying out and soothes and nourishes the nose and paranasal sinuses.

Besides this very obvious use, traditional wisdom tells us that there are several other benefits to the instillation of medicated oil into the nose as listed below-

- Keeping the eyes, nose and ears clean and healthy and protecting them from various diseases
- Improved skin complexion
- Prevention of hair fall and improved hair growth
- Prevention of untimely greying of hair (and beard)
- Formation of a protective antiseptic layer on the cribriform plate thus preventing entry of germs into the central nervous system through the nose, hence preventing several associated diseases.

When and how to put the drops:

2-3 drops of oil are recommended to be put in each nostril daily in the morning, after cleansing of eyes and oral cavity.

Lie down in the supine position, placing a pillow underneath the upper back so that the front of the neck is extended and the head hangs back over the edge of the pillow.

Put two drops of plain sesame oil or medicated oil (e.g. Anu taila/Shadbindu taila) first in one and then in the other nostril.

Count slowly to one hundred or wait for ~ 1 min. and 15 seconds after which you can get up. Gargle with luke-warm water to cleanse the throat.

Cleansing of Ears

For cleansing of ears and to protect and safeguard them, a traditional practice commonly followed in India is the administering of warm sesame oil regularly in both ears. This softens the ear wax secreted in the ears, making

it easier to remove from the ear canal. In presence of an ear infection, it can be extremely soothing and comforting bringing quick relief to the ear pain.

It has now been scientifically shown that besides the uses mentioned above, regular administration of warm oil in the ears not only prevents many diseases of the ears and protects the ears from changes in the external environment but also strengthens the sensory function of the ears, preventing hearing disabilities and deafness⁵⁶.

It is recommended to be practiced daily or at least twice a week.

Cleansing of Skin

Cleansing of the skin includes:

Skin massage followed by Bath

Massaging the Skin:

Massage therapy dates back to thousands of years - references to massage can be found in ancient Indian, Chinese, Japanese and Egyptian writings⁵⁷.

Massage traditionally involves smearing of the body with unctuous or oily substances and rubbing, pressing and kneading the skin on the various parts of the body with the hands to relax the individual, relieve tension and as therapy for some ailments as given below^{58, 59, 60}.

What regular oil massage does for the body^{61, 62, 63, 64}:

- Regular massaging of the entire body enhances blood circulation in the body, improving the functions of all the vital organs and tissues, thus promoting longevity.
- It improves muscle tone and strength, delaying some of the signs of the ageing process.
- Daily oil massage provides nourishment to the skin and helps get rid of dryness making the skin lustrous, light and supple.
- Research says that massage relieves muscular aches and pains, increasing muscle flexibility and helps in recovery of muscle fatigue⁵⁴.

Massaged muscle fibres display less spasm, an increased force of contraction and enhanced endurance compared with merely rested muscles⁶⁵.

- Head massage helps relieve headaches and prevents hair fall and greying of hair
- It relaxes the individual, helping him/her to overcome fatigue. Relaxation from the stresses and strains of daily life helps promote sound sleep so massage is often used as therapy for sleeplessness and some mental ailments too.
- Improved sleep leads to an overall generalized improvement in health.

When and how often should you do oil Massage?

You can apply oil and massage it into the skin over the entire body prior to physical exercise and a bath.

Ideally, this is recommended to be done daily but if you find that difficult, try to massage the body with oil at least once every 2-3 days.

What oil to use?

Use an oil that is native to your region (e.g., mustard or sesame oil in North India, coconut or sesame oil in South India), taking into account the season (use a cooling oil like coconut oil in the summer and a heating oil like mustard oil in winter when it is cold). Of all the oils, 'Til'/sesame oil is perhaps best suited for massaging the body in all seasons.

You can also use an oil that has been processed with herbs suitable to your body constitution.

Few pointers on the massage process:

- In cold weather, it is good to mildly warm the oil prior to use while if it is hot outside you can use oil at room temperature.
- Apply the oil gently and slowly with unhurried movements.
- The entire body can be massaged with oil but if time is short, give

priority to key areas like the head, feet and legs and the ears⁶⁶. When you massage over the head, use gentle to and fro movements with the fingertips so as to avoid pulling on the hair.

- On the limbs, massage the oil in the direction of hair growth and over joints like the elbow, shoulder, knee, ankle and lumbar joints, use circular movements.

It is suggested to use caution or avoid massage in presence of fever, indigestion or abdominal discomfort due to other reasons, spinal ailments, heart conditions etc.⁶⁷.

Foot and Hand Massage^{68, 69}

Besides all the benefits of oil massage mentioned above, a specific advantage of massaging the hands and feet is that the feet have many vital points which, when pressed, impact various organs of the body. How this works:

Traditional eastern societies (like those of India and China) describe energy channels within the human body. Traditional Chinese medicine refers to energy as 'Qi' (pronounced 'chee')⁷⁰ and energy channels as 'meridians'⁷¹; in India, energy channels are referred to as 'nadis'^{72, 73}. It is said that of the twelve meridians or energy channels in the human body, six of them either begin or end at the feet! This means that the feet have a multitude of pressure points that can impact the energy system of the entire body.

The energy channels are said to be subtle and hence invisible to the eyes and while science may not as yet corroborate their existence, traditional Chinese and Indian medicine have been known to give a lot of importance to healing through massaging along the energy channels and pressing on the pressure points linked to these channels (referred to as acupressure)^{74,75}.

It is said that whenever there is a blockage in the flow of energy in these energy channels, it ultimately is linked to the development of illness/disease. Blockage in these channels may be caused by external injury or by external climatic conditions e.g., excessively cold, windy, dry, damp or hot weather or may even result from negative emotions in the Self (e.g., anger, hatred, fear, grief, anxiety etc.)^{76,77}.

Acupressure massage on the entire body and specifically on the vital pressure points on the palms and soles can help release these blockages allowing the free flow of energy to resume in the body. For specific ailments, people who specialise in the knowledge of acupressure can be approached but for routine massage of the hands and feet for general health and well-being, one can do the massage on one's own body. Wash your hands and feet thoroughly with clean luke warm water and wipe them dry with a clean towel prior to massage.

This massage may improve the functioning of multiple organs like the functioning of the eyes (leading to better eyesight), the stomach, the heart, liver etc. and may help prevent problems related to the nerves e.g., sciatic nerve pain.

Bathing

In the morning, after oil massage and physical exercise, the body can be massaged with dry herbal powders before rinsing with water. If you are massaging a dry herbal powder into the skin before bathing, you need not use soap when bathing.

Herbal powders are a good substitute to soaps; they not only cleanse the skin but also soften it and make it supple (unlike soaps which may be harsh on the skin).

Preparing Herbal powders for Bathing:

You can make these herbal powders at home by mixing several combinations of herbs as given below:

- > Gram flour, black gram flour, green gram flour, red lentil and herbs like Manjishta (*Rubia cordifolia*), red sandalwood (*Pterocarpus santalinus*) Usheera (*Vetiveriazizanioides*), Kustha (*Saussurealappa*), Haridra (*Curcuma longa*) can be mixed and used.
- > Tila Churna (powder of sesame seeds) – extremely beneficial for curbing itching, dryness, skin ailments

- > Powder prepared from Tila (*Sesamum indicum*), Sarshapa (*Brassica campestris*), Haridra (*Curcuma longa*), Daruharidra (*Berberis* species) and Kushta (*Saussurealappa*).

Bathing is one of the simplest ways of cleansing and removing dirt from the body and should be a necessary part of one's daily morning routine. Bathing with warm water helps opens up the pores of the skin which is crucial for removing deep seated dirt from within the skin and for flushing out toxins from the body.

Apart from cleansing the skin of sweat and dirt, and giving relief from itching due to localised skin ailments, it imparts a freshness to the body, dispelling drowsiness and bringing relief from exhaustion.

Traditional civilisations have given a lot of importance to the daily bath routine not just for cleansing the body but also for stimulating hunger, maintaining the health of the body and preventing disease^{78,79,80,81}. In fact, the use of water can even be therapeutic. The science of naturopathy uses water as therapy (referred to as hydrotherapy) and water in all the three forms (water, ice and steam) is an integral part of the many naturopathic remedies used for treating various diseases⁸².

Some bathing recommendations^{83, 84, 85}:

The ideal time for the daily whole body water bath is early in the morning^{86,87}. One can also bathe more often in the course of the day, especially after physical exercise.

If suitable to the climate, water at normal temperature is preferable for bathing. Water that is either too cold or too hot is not recommended.

Use of warm water is especially contraindicated for a head bath as it drains the hair of its strength and lustre making it dull and lifeless and is also harmful for the eyes.

After the bath, the body can be rubbed with clean and dry towel and fresh clothes put on. Use of wet or damp clothes or those that were worn before the bath is not recommended.

Exposure to Nature and the Natural Attributes

Once we're through with the daily morning routine cleansing processes, what can then be another part of our daily routine?

In section two, when we discussed the body and its constitution, we said that the body is physical and is made up of the five attributes in nature – earth, water, fire, air and ether/space. If this is so, then it should be logical to expect that the proximity of the body to these attributes would help to keep it (the body) in harmony/ health. Traditional societies were well aware of this and hence the lifestyle back then included exposure to fresh air (spending plenty of time in the outdoors), to fresh/flowing water (e.g., bathing in rivers), exposure to the soil/earth (walking bare foot) and to sunlight (the attribute of fire) on a daily basis.

Today, with the help of scientific research, we seem to be coming to similar conclusions: in the previous section on intake, we looked at the significant benefits of the intake of fresh air (whether it be through exposure to the outdoors or via better cross ventilation in the house). We also saw the significant health benefits of being in the early morning sunlight. You can go back and refer to the section on Intake for better recall.

Coming to water which forms more than three-fourths of the human body, you may be aware of the science of 'hydrotherapy'- the use of water for healing the body/bringing it back into harmony. This is not only an age-old practice but very much in use today in the form of steam baths, saunas, cold/hot water packs, enemas etc.

What about the earth attribute? Scientific research is now showing that contact of the bare skin with soil/ earth (referred to as "earthing" or "grounding") reduces the stress, pain and inflammation in the body, helping to heal the various internal organs and to bring the body back into harmony⁸⁸.

So, if there are all these health benefits to exposing the body to the natural environment, should this not be a part of your daily routine? In fact, if you see, just incorporating a single practice in your daily routine can help your body to have exposure to all the natural attributes at the same time! What

is that practice? The activity of 'labour'- working with nature (e.g., farming) (discussed in the next section). If you spend some time daily in the morning working with nature, you will not only be exposing the body to all the natural attributes at the same time but also bringing about movement in the body, further enhancing the health benefits for the body.

Meal Recommendations with Regard to the Daily Routine

Now let us talk about our meals and their relation to our daily routine. When we spoke of the intake of food, we discussed the various qualities the food should have (that it should be nutritious and nurturing for the body, should be digestible and should be readily excretable by the body). What about the timing of the meals? When is the right time to eat? Is there any significance to what time of day or night you eat?

Certainly, we do need to consider the appropriateness of meal times with regard to the cycle of day and night (e.g., how many meals to have in a day, the right times to have the meals, how much of a gap to have in between two meals etc.) the appropriateness of the quantity of food we eat (when to eat larger meals and when to eat smaller ones) and the appropriateness of the selection of food (e.g., which foods to eat at what time of day etc.). Some of this was elaborated on in the chapter on intake of food, the remaining has been discussed here.

Meal timings with respect to the day-night cycle:

To decide how often to eat meals, one needs to be aware of how much time it takes for the body to digest food because the meal will benefit the body only if the previous meal has been properly and fully digested. If we eat before the previous meal has been fully digested, it will result in indigestion with gas formation, bloating, stomach pain and acidity.

To avoid such issues, maintain a gap of 4-8 hours (or at least a clear gap of a minimum of 4 hours) between meals because it takes 4 hours for food to be digested in the stomach and for it to then move out of the stomach and down into the intestines.

For teenagers and young adults in their twenties, especially those doing a lot of heavy manual work or those who are very active physically, three meals are generally required in the span of the day; for those who are a little older (~beyond 30-35 years) or those who are not very physically active and have a sedentary lifestyle, two meals are likely to be sufficient.

Traditional wisdom suggests the following ideal meal timings for three meals a day:

Breakfast – 7 to 8 am (latest by 9am)

Lunch - 12 noon to 1 pm (latest by 2 pm)

Dinner – 6 to 7 pm (latest by 8 pm)

Why these timings are considered to be ideal:

The human body, being a material entity is impacted by nature and the natural rhythm of day and night (see principles and recommendations) and this effect can be seen very distinctly on the digestive system of the body which is influenced by the rising and setting of the sun. Thus, as the sun rises, the digestive capacity of the body increases, rising to peak capacity by noon when the mid-day sun is overhead and as the day progresses, the digestive capacity gradually decreases coming down to near minimal for the day by sundown. This clearly explains the lunch and dinner timings; what about breakfast? Breakfast necessarily has to be early so as to maintain a clear gap between breakfast and lunch.

Meal quantities with respect to day-night cycle:

In the morning, the body is naturally in cleansing mode, trying to get rid of the previous day's toxins and waste matter that have accumulated in the body (this is why all the cleansing processes discussed previously are recommended to be a part of the morning routine– to help facilitate the natural cleansing processes going on in the body at that time).

Therefore, the early morning breakfast should be light for two reasons—

1. Digestive capacity is low and just starting to increase.
2. The body is working on cleansing at this time so it is best to let it focus

on this task rather than interfere with the process, forcing the body to divert attention to an overburdened digestive system trying to digest large quantities of difficult to digest foods.

Digestion being at its peak at noon, lunch is the time for a hearty meal – this can be the largest meal of the day.

Dinner, on the contrary, should be your lightest meal of the day

Selections of food based on the day-night cycle:

Since the body is preoccupied with cleansing processes in the morning almost up to 10am, breakfast should ideally consist of foods that are light and cleansing for the digestive system e.g., fruit that is unprocessed. All unprocessed fruit has a lot of fibre and gets assimilated into the body quickly, moving out of the stomach within 2-2½ hours, down the intestinal tract and out of the body roughly by 6-8 hours. So, unprocessed fruit is a good choice for breakfast.

If more hungry and if you are young, very active and have a strong, healthy digestive system, you can also include sprouted pulses, milk or porridge made with cracked wheat (daliya), oatmeal, ragi etc. in your breakfast selection. This will not only appease your appetite but will also help to keep your hunger satisfied for longer. Note that if you have a weak digestive system, this may not be appropriate for you as sprouts and milk can both be difficult to digest.

Avoid greasy, fried and heavy foods – not only will they burden the digestive tract but will also make you dull, lethargic and sleepy and leave you feeling full and devoid of an appetite for lunch which was to be your largest meal of the day!

In a nutshell,

Breakfast – 7-8 am (latest by 9am), light, preferably with cleansing foods like fruit

Lunch – 12 noon-1 pm (latest by 2 pm), moderate to large meal – heaviest meal of the day

Dinner – 6-7 pm (latest by 8 pm), lightest meal of the day.

Sleep

Going to sleep forms the last part of the day's routine. We may be spending almost a third of our lifetime sleeping⁸⁹ but are we aware of the importance of a good night's sleep? Are we aware of the right time to sleep and how long to sleep for? Is it good to sleep during the day or not? What to do if we are unable to sleep at night or what to do if we feel sleepy during the day?

We'll try and address some of these and other similar questions that you may have wondered about from time to time.

The importance of a good night's sleep:

What's a good night's sleep? Good quality sleep is sleep that makes you feel rested and fresh when you wake up in the morning and not tired, dull or lethargic. Quality sleep is one indicator of good health⁹⁰.

Like a proper diet, proper sleep is also essential for good health⁹¹. A large number of vital processes take place in the night when we sleep and these help us stay healthy and function at our best⁹². In fact, proper sleep even enhances longevity⁹³. When we go to sleep at night, the body is busy secreting hormones that help control the glucose and energy metabolism, the growth of the body, the digestion etc. restoring the tissues to their normal equilibrium.

More importantly, when we sleep at night the body tries to reverse all the damage, we inflict on it during the day. Knowingly or unknowingly, we often misuse the body, inflicting a lot of damage on it e.g., we don't always eat the right things that are good for the body, we may not always eat food at the right time or we may not always have the right feelings (feelings that are naturally acceptable to us) and all this causes damage to the body. Through various processes of repair and regeneration that kick in at night when we sleep, the body tries to cope with all this damage and recuperate. So, sleep is much like recharging ourselves – a rest and recharge not just of the body but also of the Self - good sleep at night leading to alert wakefulness during the day.

Needless to say, this doesn't mean that we can feel free to eat junk all the

time or have all the wrong emotions (like anger, jealousy, anxiety etc.) and expect the body to take care of itself and bounce back each time because if we keep inflicting damage, over time the body may not be able to cope with it.

Duration of sleep (how long should you be sleeping?):

Sleep patterns, especially the amount of time we spend sleeping, vary with age. While new-born babies may sleep almost 20 of the 24 hours in a day, teenagers may sleep half this time or less and adults may sleep a third of this time or less.

Whenever the body is in an active growing stage, it needs more sleep (remember we mentioned that growth hormone is one of the hormones that is released in the body at night when we sleep) so new-born babies (who have very rapid growth) need maximum sleep while as we get older, our sleep requirement diminishes. Toddlers, school going children and teenagers tend to go through growth spurts from time to time and hence need more sleep than adults but less than new-born babies. Women who are pregnant need a few extra hours of sleep compared to most adults (due to the presence of a growing baby in the mother's womb).

The table given below shows the average time we spend sleeping at a given age. Table: Average duration of sleep in the various stages of life

Stage of life	Average duration of Sleep
New-born	14-18 hours a day
Infants, toddlers and preschoolers	12-16 hours a day
School-going children	9 -12 hours a day
Teenagers	8-10 hours a day
Adults (including the elderly)	6-8 hours a day

For most healthy adults, 6-8 hours of sleep at night is sufficient

So does every healthy person fit into this table? Not necessarily! Each person's need for sleep may vary. You may know of several people who sleep less than or more than what is mentioned in the table above. This is

because how long we sleep is not just dependent on our age but is also a function of what we eat, how physically active our body is, how we think (what goes on in our mind) etc.!

For a day or two, take note of what you eat and see how alert or sleepy you feel. You may find that when you eat foods in their raw, unprocessed forms (e.g., fruit, salads etc.) you tend to need less sleep while at the other extreme, when you eat overly cooked, fried, processed or spicy foods, you seem to need more sleep.

Also, take note of your physical activity and its link with sleep. You may notice that when you wake up early in the morning and do a bit of exercise (like walking, jogging, stretching etc.), you are more alert and seem to need less sleep while when you wake up late and skip the exercise, that you tend to feel more dull, lazy and lethargic the whole day.

Now pay a little attention to your thoughts. When do you get to sleep easily at night – when you're calm and relaxed or when you have some conflict in the mind? Think about it – when you go to bed at night, do you fall asleep right away or do you take hours to sleep? How much time do you spend actually sleeping and how much time do you spend, lying awake in bed, perhaps with eyes closed, tossing and turning, thinking of this and that, this person and that person? If this (lying awake in bed with eyes closed) is also classified as sleep, then the duration of sleep required by different people may vary tremendously, isn't it?

While there are various stages of sleep e.g., the REM stage ('rapid eye movement' – the stage of sleep in which we dream) and all stages of sleep are important, the most essential stage is that of deep sleep – this is the one in which we really recharge; the one that is most rejuvenating. It is said that even a couple of hours of this deep sleep at night is more beneficial than all of the other stages of sleep put together. When does this deep sleep take place? Usually around midnight or so (provided we get to bed at the right time) and this brings us to the question – “What is the right time to sleep?”

Right time to get to bed:

We mentioned that the ideal time to wake up is ~ 1 ½ hours before sunrise

so if sunrise is at 6 am for you, the ideal time for you to wake up would be ~ 4.30 am and if you need roughly 6 hours of sleep at night then you should ideally get to bed by 10 pm or so.

If we fall asleep by 10 pm or so, we are likely to be in deep sleep by about midnight. This will allow the body's repair and regeneration processes to take place undisrupted so that when we wake up, we are fully refreshed and recharged.

Irregular sleep patterns – their impact on health

What if we don't get the required quality sleep at night? We feel dull, lazy, lethargic and sleepy the next day (we've all experienced this at some time or the other). Research has also well established that insufficient quality sleep results not only in excessive daytime sleepiness but also causes problems in attention, concentration, cognitive functioning, impulsivity and even mood regulation^{94, 95, 96, 97}.

In practical terms, lack of proper sleep at night can affect your judgment, your mood, even your ability to learn and retain information. In the long term, this chronic sleep deprivation disturbs the body's entire hormonal balance, disrupting the equilibrium of the body and resulting in a whole series of associated health problems like obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease etc.⁹⁸.

What if you don't get enough sleep at night? Can you compensate for it by sleeping during the day? Does that help? Not really.

Day sleep and its effects

Day time naps that are longer than 30 minutes tend to lead to sleep inertia – a reduced ability to think and perform for a while, after awakening. Confusion, grogginess and delayed cognitive performance may be associated with this transition⁹⁹.

Besides, the body's internal clock is geared up for recharge (repair, regeneration and detoxification) during deep sleep at night –it doesn't take place during daytime naps. Daytime napping is considered to be a normal part of the daily routine only for babies and young children.

So sleeping excessively or depriving yourself of sleep or sleeping at the wrong times are all associated with health problems and are therefore not recommended.

Resolving problems of sleeplessness at night^{100, 101, 102, 103:}

You know the right time to sleep; you also know that it's not so good to sleep during the day so you decide to go to bed early at night - but you get tired of trying, tossing and turning seemingly for hours and yet not being able to get to sleep! What to do?

As mentioned earlier, sleep doesn't just have to do with the time you get into bed but is also significantly affected by your intake, your lifestyle etc. Here are some suggestions to help you sleep better:

1. Try and do some form of **daily physical exercise** for at least 30-45 minutes (e.g., stretches, yoga, jogging, walking etc.), preferably in the morning or early evening but definitely no later than 2-3 hours before bedtime (and certainly not after meals). A somewhat tired body will help you fall asleep, provided you don't overdo the exercise and get overly fatigued
2. Stick to a **regular daily routine** with a regular and early rising time and a regular bedtime so that the body clock doesn't have to keep readjusting to a changing routine.
3. **Avoid daytime naps** unless absolutely necessary. If you must take an afternoon nap, do so in the early rather than late afternoon (late afternoon naps can make it harder for you to fall asleep at night) and restrict your nap to 15-20 minutes (definitely no more than one hour).
4. **Avoid or minimise your consumption of stimulants** like caffeine, nicotine etc. especially in the second half of the day. Such stimulants interfere with sleep; the stimulating effects of caffeine in coffee, colas, certain teas, and chocolate may take up to 8 hours to wear off completely.
5. If you're the anxious type who worries about everything and that's a major reason why you can't sleep, add some deep breathing exercises (see breath regulation in the next section) in your daily routine and

dedicate a specific time in the day to observing your thoughts and feelings and check if they are naturally acceptable to you or not. Do they make you feel comfortable or not? Try and just observe without reacting to or avoiding even those thoughts and feelings that make you uncomfortable – do so with an acceptance and this will help you calm down and relax.

6. Be sure to get a lot of sunlight during the day (to help the body get in sync with the day-night cycle) and **avoid bright artificial lights before bedtime**. So put away your mobile ‘phone, laptop etc. at least an hour before bedtime because the bright lights of their screens suppress the secretion of melatonin (the sleep hormone) in the body, preventing you from sleeping.
7. **Avoid large meals and beverages late at night**. Large late-night meals may lead to indigestion and an interference with sleep just as drinking large quantities of fluid at night may compel you to wake up frequently in the night for urination, thus disrupting your sleep.
8. Ensure that the **room** you sleep in has a **good environment** – proper ventilation, a comfortable temperature (neither too hot nor too cold) and, if required, protection from mosquitoes etc. (e.g., with a mosquito net).

Get rid of things in the bedroom that distract you from sleeping e.g., noises like those from clocks etc., bright lights, an uncomfortable bed, a TV or computer in the bedroom etc.
9. Take time to **relax and unwind** before bedtime. The relaxing activity could be a warm shower, reading a good book, listening to soothing music, the practice of meditation etc. Several of these could be a part of your daily bedtime ritual.
10. Last thing before you get into bed, you may **like to massage both feet**, especially the soles, with warm sesame oil or coconut oil. This will not only relax the body but will also massage all the pressure points on the soles of the feet and help you sleep better through the night.

11. Sleeping in the supine position (on the back) or on the left side are recommended. Sleeping in the prone position should be avoided as it restricts easy breathing.
12. Once in bed, when attempting to sleep, think positive thoughts – thoughts based on feelings that are naturally acceptable to you (e.g., feelings of relationship, of gratitude, of love) – thoughts about the well-being of all. These will help you to be calm and peaceful and you will sleep better. If you fall asleep with the right feelings and thoughts, you will wake up also with the right feelings and right thoughts. These will start your day on a good note and keep you feeling good throughout the day.

Feeling Sleepy during the day:

If this is an issue plaguing you, check the following:

- Make sure you're not eating too much junk food (fried, sugary or processed foods)
- Include more fruit and salads in your diet
- Ensure that you are drinking ample liquids
- Make exercise (at least half an hour) a part of your daily routine
- Avoid very heavy meals and frequent snacking

When you go to bed at night and are in deep sleep, it is the end of the day for you but not so for the body. Undisturbed by you, it works on repairing, rejuvenating and recharging itself so it is ready for the next day. This is the way the body is self-organised; working with a definite conduct, day in and day out, in tune with the day and night cycle in nature (provided we don't mess with it).

If we understand this, not only will we not disturb the body functions but we will also try to aid them wherever possible and we just saw the many ways in which we can do that.

Health Tracker

Given next is a proposal for a “Health Tracker”; this tracker is an example of a list of all the various practices that can be incorporated in the daily routine to aid the body’s inherent processes for maintaining harmony. On this check-list, you can tick off daily, those activities that you were able to carry out (and note those that you missed).

Over time, you may be able to notice the effect of some of these added activities on the health of the body, perhaps some signs of a smoother and more optimal functioning of the body e.g., better appetite, feeling less tired, needing less sleep etc. Initially this health tracker may serve as a reminder to you; later you may find that many of these activities are now a part of your daily routine and that you no longer need a reminder!

	My Health Activity for the Week	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	Waking up (~1½ hrs. before sunrise)							
	Observing Self by Self							
	Observing body (inc. breath pattern) by Self							
	Creative time (planning/creative activity)							
	Drinking warm water							
	Bowel movement							
	Cleansing teeth (natural/herbal cleanser)							
	Cleansing of tongue (metal tongue cleaner)							
	Cleansing of eyes (eye wash)							
	Cleansing of oral cavity (oil pulling)							
	Cleansing of nose and ears (drops)							
	Oil massage							
	Labour (exp. to morning sunlight + earthing)							
	Exercise							
	Cleansing of skin - bath (herbal powders)							
	Yoga, Pranayama							
	Light breakfast (cleansing foods e.g., fruit (8 am)							
	Body posture (“Vajrasana”) after breakfast							
	Work day (+ Observing Self and body by Self)							
	Moderate, balanced lunch - 11-1 pm (<2 pm)							

	My Health Activity for the Week	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	Body posture (“Vajrasana”) after lunch							
	Rest (after lunch) – 15-20 minutes							
	Warm liquids (e.g., herbal ‘tea’) + fruit (4-6 pm)							
	Time with family and friends							
	Yoga, pranayama, ‘earthing’, contemplation							
	Light dinner – 6-8 pm							
	Body posture (“Vajrasana”) after dinner							
	Short walk after dinner							
	Sharing day’s experiences with family							
	Evaluation of the day/planning for next day							
	Cleansing teeth and oral cavity							
	Putting away mobile, laptop etc.							
	Lights out – 9:30 pm (Observing the Self)							
	In bed and asleep – 10 pm							

The above is an example of a reminder you could use to add to your daily routine activities for better health. You could also make one of your own or alter some of the activities given above as per your convenience. Needless to say that observing the Self by the Self, though mentioned at specific times, would, ultimately, need to be done every moment to ensure a healthy Self (and health in the Self is necessary to ensure health in the body).

Test Your Understanding

1. Go to bed by 10 pm at night. Wake up early the next day – between 4 and 6 am in the morning – and have a glass of warm water prior to 6 am. Observe and note down the impact of this on the following—
 - Your bowel movement – whether it was easy or difficult for you to have a bowel movement, if the stool was hard or soft, any other observation
 - Your level of alertness throughout the day – highly alert, moderately alert or very alert
 - Your ‘mood’ throughout the day – good/moderate or bad mood

Do this exercise for the whole week and note down your observations daily as shown in the table below.

Day of the Week	Rising time	Sleeping time	Bowel movement	Daytime alertness	Mood during the day
Monday	5 am	10 pm	Soft, quick, easy	Alert throughout; No drowsiness	Cheerful
Tuesday	Etc....				

At the end of the week, go through all your observations. Do you notice a pattern? What conclusions could you draw from this exercise?

- The following week, continue to do the above exercise but this time, add two extra columns in the above table - one for timing of dinner and one for sleep. While you continue to wake up early, go to sleep early and make the observations in the table above as before, try and have an early dinner every night (~ 7 pm) so that you finish your dinner by 8 pm and then go to bed by 10 pm as before. In case you have a late dinner, just note down the timing of the late dinner (e.g., 9 pm/9.30 pm etc.) and continue with the exercise as before. (If you eat a snack after dinner later in the night, make a note of it). Note down your observations regarding the quality of your sleep - whether you slept well or not, felt rested in the morning or not, whether the body seemed light or heavy the next morning etc.

Do this exercise for the whole week, noting down your observations every day. At the end of the week, go through all your observations. Could you see a pattern between your dinner time and the quality of your sleep? What conclusions could you draw from this exercise?

- Take a look at the health tracker and incorporate as many of the given health activities (the practices and the processes) as you can, ticking them on the chart. Follow the tracker and do the activities for an entire week. Were you able to notice any changes in the body? Note down your observations daily and continue to do so for the whole week.

Chapter 18

Seasonal Regimen/Seasonal Routine

Having gone through the daily routine, let us now take a look at the seasonal routine.

About the Seasons:

We spoke of the earth's rotation on its own axis, each rotation taking ~ 24 hours and thus leading to the day and night cycle (the part receiving sunlight being day and the part not receiving sunlight at that time, being in darkness and thus experiencing night).

The Earth's axis is an imaginary pole going right through the centre of the Earth from "top" to "bottom"¹⁰⁴. This imaginary axis on which the earth rotates is tilted by ~23.4 degrees (varying from near 22 degrees to 24.5 degrees) as compared to the plane of the Earth's orbit around the Sun¹⁰⁵. This tilt causes our yearly cycle of seasons.

Throughout the year, different parts of the Earth receive the most direct rays of the Sun. So, when the North Pole tilts toward the Sun, it's summer in the Northern Hemisphere. Less direct rays of the sun lead to winter in the southern hemisphere. Six months later, when the South Pole tilts toward the Sun, it's winter in the Northern Hemisphere. And when both hemispheres receive roughly equal amounts of heat from the Sun, we have the spring and fall seasons.

We also know that while rotating on its own axis, the earth is also revolving around the sun. It takes 365.25 days for the earth to complete one trip around the Sun¹⁰⁶. For convenience of calculation, the modern calendar system equates one year as 365 days and adds one day to every 4 years (the leap year).

Need and Importance of the Seasonal regimen:

The changing seasons have an impact on all units in nature: plants and

trees shed their leaves in one season, retain water in another season; animals hibernate in one season, search for and store food for themselves in another season and so on¹⁰⁷. The human being is no exception – the human body is impacted by the various changing seasons. An understanding of the seasons and their impact on the human body is thus extremely important; on the basis of this understanding, specific diets and lifestyles have been prescribed for the various seasons. These dietary and lifestyle modifications for the specific seasons have been referred to as healthy seasonal regimens.

The different Seasons:

We mentioned that seasons occur due to the tilted axis of the earth. During the movement of the earth around the sun, in the six month period when the northern hemisphere of the earth is tilting towards the sun, it is referred to as ‘Uttarayana’ and when the northern hemisphere is tilted maximally towards the sun (corresponding to the 21st of June), it is referred to as the Northern Solstice. On this date, the northern hemisphere of the earth experiences its longest day (and shortest night). From this day onwards, days in the northern hemisphere start becoming shorter and the nights longer. This is the start of the six month period when the southern hemisphere starts tilting towards the sun (referred to as ‘Dakshinayana’).

When the southern hemisphere is tilted maximally towards the sun (on the 22nd of December), it is the southern hemisphere that experiences its longest day (while the northern hemisphere now experiences its shortest day and longest night). This is referred to as the Southern Solstice. From this day onwards and for the next six months, days in the Southern hemisphere start becoming shorter and nights longer (while in the northern hemisphere, days start becoming longer and nights shorter). This six-month period is referred to as ‘Uttarayana’ or movement of the sunlight towards the northern hemisphere.

With the start of Uttarayana, the climate starts warming up in the northern hemisphere until there is peak heat by the time of the Northern Solstice. Then, with the start of Dakshinayana, the northern hemisphere starts experiencing cooler weather until the time of the Southern Solstice when the cold weather is at its maximum. After this, the whole cycle repeats...

Now let us take a look at the various seasons and their specific characteristics. Each season is a specific period in the year characterised by a specific climatic condition⁵. Six seasons can be seen in India annually. Both Uttarayana and Dakshinayana last for a period of 6 months in the year each and each comprises 3 seasons (each season lasting for a period of 2 months). So, in India, we have -

Shishira (winter), Vasanta (spring), and Grishma (summer) during Uttarayana (the heat gradually increasing with each season) and

Varsha (rainy or monsoon), Sharat (autumn) and Hemanta (pre-winter) during Dakshinayana (the cold gradually increasing with each season).

Varying body Strength in the varying seasons:

An important point for us to note is that towards the end of the Uttarayana or close to the Northern Solstice and in the beginning of the Dakshinayana (Visarga Kala), that is, during Varsha (rainy) and Grishma (summer) seasons, there is weakness in the body and body strength is low.

In the middle of the solstices, that is, during Sharat (autumn) and Vasanta (spring), the body strength is moderate while towards the end of the Dakshinayana and in the beginning of the Uttarayana, that is, during the Hemanta (pre-winter) and Shishira (winter) seasons, the body strength is at its peak or maximum¹⁰⁸.

Regimens for the Individual seasons:

Hemanta (Pre-Winter) Season:

During this season, (~mid-November to mid-January) the weather is cold and there is moistness in the air.

In this season, the body has a higher capacity to digest food and its capacity to assimilate food is also at its peak, compared to other seasons.

Diet: Unctuous (oily/greasy) substances, sweet, sour, and salty foods can be consumed in this season. So one can have milk and milk products, sugar

cane and its derivatives (e.g., jaggery), foods made from wheat flour, and various fats. Freshly harvested rice, black gram (*Phaseolus mungo*), sesame seeds etc. which are heavy and harder to digest, can all be included in the diet in this season without a problem.

Avoid bitter, pungent and astringent foods, fasting or undereating, and consuming cold foods and drinks.

Lifestyle: Keeping the body warm by applying oils that are warm for the body (e.g., mustard oil), doing some regular daily physical exercise, using warm water, wearing comfortable warm clothing and residing in a warm place are all helpful and recommended.

Avoid exposure to cold winds and avoid sleeping during the day time in this season.

Shishira (Winter) Season:

Mid-January to mid-March is considered to be the Shishira(winter) season. During this season, the weather remains cold and is accompanied by cold and dry winds.

In this season also, the body has a higher digestive capacity (in cold weather, blood vessels in the periphery of the body constrict, leading to conservation of heat in the internal organs and thus better digestion – better appetite).

Diet and Lifestyle: Similar to that suggested for the Hemant (pre-winter) season.

Things to avoid: Same as those suggested for the Hemant season.

Vasant (Spring) Season:

Extending from mid-March to mid-May is the spring season - the very pleasant season of flowering and the origin of new leaves on plants, shrubs and trees.

As mentioned earlier, body strength in this season is moderate and the digestive capacity of the body is poor (low).

Diet: In this season, it is advisable to limit oneself to the consumption of foods that are easily digestible. Among the cereals, barley, wheat and rice (harvested earlier rather than recently) are the preferred grains. Foods that are bitter, pungent, or astringent in taste are preferable to eat. Honey can also be included in the diet, either plain or mixed with water.

Drinking water can be processed with herbs like Musta or nutgrass (*Cyperus rotundus*) and Sunthi or dry ginger (*Zingiber officinalis*) making it beneficial for health in this season.

Avoid excessive intake of astringent foods. Sweet, sour, cold and unctuous foods and those that are heavy and difficult to digest are also best avoided. Freshly harvested grains, curd and cold drinks should be strictly refrained from in this season.

Lifestyle: Nasal instillation, oil pulling (filling the mouth with medicated oil), daily physical exercise, rubbing medicated dry powders on the body before bath, applying herbal paste of Chandana (*Santalum album*), Agar (Aquillaria agallocha) etc. on the skin and a bath with warm water are suggested.

Avoid sleeping during the day time.

Grishma (Summer) Season:

Mid-May to mid-July is considered to be the Grishma (summer) season. In this season, the atmosphere is one of oppressive heat with the blowing of hot and dry winds during the day, leading to tiredness and exhaustion.

In this season, one's body strength as well as the digestive power of the body are both low. The hot weather leads to the loss of a substantial quantity of body fluids in the form of sweat and when the temperature soars, often the scorching heat from the blazing sun can lead to dehydration of the body unless one takes proper precautions.

Diet: Easily digestible, naturally sweet foods that contain a lot of water/liquid and are cooling for the body are ideal in this season. So, one can consume rice, milk, the juice of sweet and sour fruits churned with water, cooling liquids and unctuous foods like ghee.

Drinking water can be consumed either at room temperature or by cooling it with the help of natural methods (e.g., by storing in earthen pots). Naturally cooled fruits juices, fruit having a lot of water content (e.g., watermelon, grapes etc.) and coconut water are good choices for this season. More liquids are preferred in the diet as opposed to dry and solid foods.

Avoid foods that are pungent, excessively salty and those that have a sour taste or those that lead to the production of a lot of heat in the body. Refrain strictly from alcoholic preparations.

Lifestyle: During the day, it is best to be indoors, stay cool and take a short afternoon nap in a cool atmosphere if possible. Thin and light loose-fitting clothes that prevent the retention of heat and sweat in the body are ideal. Walking in a garden and surrounding oneself by flowers near water bodies can be very refreshing in the evenings.

One way of keeping the body cool at night is by exposing the extremities to the atmosphere as opposed to covering them up. Applying chandan (sandalwood powder) on the body and sleeping under the moonlight has also been prescribed for the same.

Avoid excessive exercise or hard physical work as there is very little strength in the body.

Varsha (Rainy) Season:

The rainy season generally lasts from mid-July to mid-September in most parts of the country. During this season, there is minimal sunlight and the sky is usually overcast with clouds that lead to rain without thunderstorms. Ponds, rivers and other water bodies are usually full and brimming with water.

Body strength is quite low and the digestive capacity which was already weak in the summer season now weakens further.

Diet: Measures can be taken to increase the body's digestive capacity. It is helpful to consume a light and nutritious diet prepared with barley, wheat and 'old' (previously harvested) rice. One can consume foods with a sour

or salty taste and unctuous properties. The addition of small quantities of honey in food and drinks is also beneficial.

Drinking water should be consumed only after adequate filtration or proper boiling and cooling.

Avoid drinking excess water or other drinks, avoid diets rich in liquids and foods that are heavy to digest.

Lifestyle: It is suggested that one lives in a clean and dry area that protects the body from rain and moisture and prevents entry of insects, flies etc. that are prevalent in rainy weather. The body can be smeared with dry herbal pastes like those of Agarú (Aquillaria agallocha) and clean, light clothes can be worn.

Avoid living in an environment with a lot of moisture in the house and one that exposes you to direct cold, windy drafts. Sleeping in the day time or being in the sunlight for prolonged periods of time are also not advisable during this period.

Sharat (Autumn) Season:

The period from mid-September to mid-November is referred to as the Sharat (autumn) season. The sky is usually clear, though sometimes there are white clouds and the earth is covered with wet mud at the start of the season. The wind is moderately cool and not very dry. There is an increase in sunlight and with that a consequent rise of temperature. The Earth which had been cooled by rain now starts warming up with exposure to the sunlight and heat once again. The overall atmosphere is pleasant and soothing.

In this season one has moderate strength and the digestive capacity starts improving gradually.

Diet: Foods that are easy to digest, that have a sweet or bitter taste and those that are inherently cool in nature are advised during this season. So, cereals like wheat, pulses like green gram, fully and naturally ripened seasonal fruit, fresh seasonal vegetables, palm candy (mishri), honey, milk, butter etc. can be consumed. Needless to say, that food should be consumed

only when one has the appropriate feeling of hunger for it. Ghee medicated with bitter drugs is also beneficial for health in this season.

Avoid curd, salty foods, those with excess salt or cooked with excessive use of spices and avoid alcoholic drinks.

Lifestyle: Being in pleasant surroundings like gardens, fountains, natural water falls, flowers etc. wearing light, clean and pleasant clothes and exposure to moon rays at night are considered beneficial and therefore suggested.

Avoid sleeping during the day time, over eating, excessive exposure to sunlight, etc.,

Now that we have a better understanding of the different seasons and how we can aid the body in maintaining its harmony despite the impact of the changing seasons on it, let us also discuss how to help the body maintain harmony at the cusps of the seasons – during the transition phase between one season and the next.

Exercising Caution During Seasonal Transitions:

To keep the body in good health we need to change our diet and lifestyle in keeping with the changing seasons. Food that is conducive to the health of the body in a particular season may be disruptive for it in the next season. A life style that suits one season perfectly may be totally unsuitable for the next season.

So, when we move from one season to the next, we need to change our diet and lifestyle accordingly. This change of stopping the routine of the previous season and adopting the routine of the coming season should be gradual. The change should not be sudden or abrupt. The last seven days of the previous season coupled with the first seven days of the next season together comprise the-inter seasonal transition period. During this transition period, one needs to be cautious and change over to the new seasonal routine slowly and gradually.

Test Your Understanding

1. Make a list of the appropriate foods and appropriate lifestyle for the current season. Are your food habits and your lifestyle in accordance with the season? If not, write down what changes you plan to make to be in synchronisation with the current seasonal rhythm.
2. What are seasonal transitions? Why and for how long do you need to exercise caution during the transition from one season to the next?
3. Make a chart of the different seasons and the appropriate food and lifestyle for each season. Post it in a visible area of your room and try to follow it for every season. Are you able to notice any changes in the health of the body? Write down your observations.

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Part VI

Practices and Processes for Ensuring Health in the Body - III

Chapter 19

Labour and Exercise

We have seen the significance of the right intake and a daily routine in synchronisation with nature in our staying healthy (maintaining the body in harmony). Let us now look at the role of some of the other factors in keeping the body healthy, starting with labour and exercise.

Program for Health - Labour and Exercise

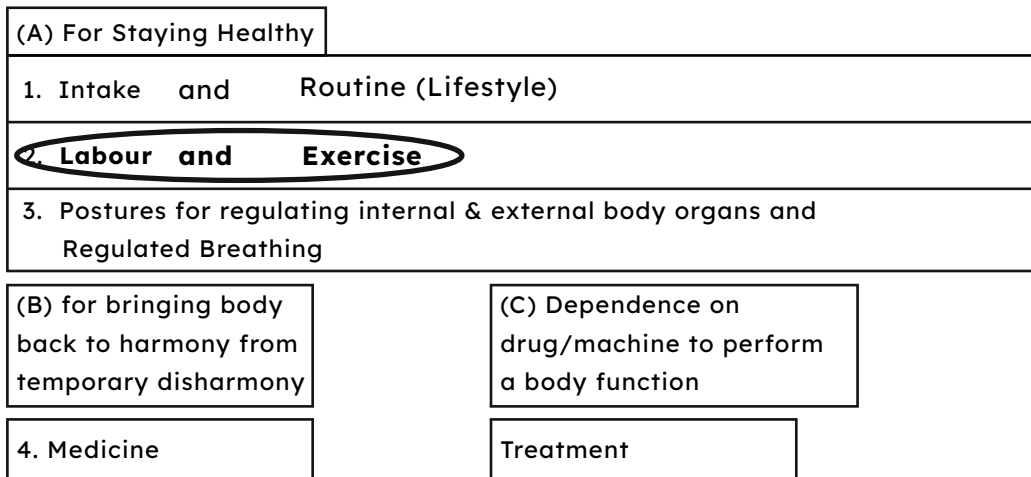


Figure - 19.1

With the advent of technology, we've made our outwardly life very comfortable - we use vehicles to go from one place to another, we're doing more and more things online (buying groceries, paying our bills, even learning on-line with online classes etc.) and this certainly has its convenience and saves us a lot of time but are we also aware of the change this has brought about in our physical activity? Studies say that an increase in the use of "passive" modes of transport has been associated with declining physical activity¹. Of course, you don't need a study to tell you this - it is simple enough to see that the physical activity that was a part and parcel of a

routine day in the lives of our fathers and forefathers is largely missing in our lives today.

And though we're saving a lot of time with the help of the technological advances we've made, what are we doing with the extra time we save? How much of this time are we active outdoors and how much time are we spending indoors – sitting behind a desk, in front of the laptop, TV, with the mobile 'phone etc. with barely any movement?

So the more technologically advanced we've become, the less physically active we seem to have become. And we all know the significance of physical activity when it comes to keeping the body healthy – as per the WHO, insufficient physical activity is one of the leading risk factors for mortality²- insufficiently physically active people have a 20-30% increased risk of all causes of mortality as compared to those who engage in at least 30 minutes of physical activity of moderate intensity on most days of the week². What can be concluded from this and the world-wide healthcare crisis today resulting largely from a massive increase in totally preventable lifestyle disorders like obesity, diabetes, hypertension etc.? Just that we're not physically active enough!

The solution to this crisis doesn't lie in more sophisticated machines, equipment, laboratories or even more doctors and hospitals. It just involves a plain and simple increase in physical activity that can help the various organs and organ systems of the body to function optimally and efficiently.

A minimum of ~2 ½ hours (or 150 minutes) of moderate physical activity each week (or its equivalent) is estimated to reduce the risk of ischaemic heart disease, diabetes and breast and colon cancer³. Needless to say, if you are physically active for a longer duration each week, you are likely to enjoy greater health benefits. Physical activity also lowers the risk of stroke, hypertension and depression. Additionally, when you spend energy being physically active, it helps to keep your body weight in check (so physical activity helps in weight control too)⁴.

What this means is that you can incorporate some physical activity in your daily routine to help keep the body healthy and strong.

The WHO mentions that physical activity of both moderate and vigorous intensity brings health benefits⁴. What about less intense activity? Certainly, doing some physical activity is better than doing none! What if you've been inactive so far, you may ask? Well, even if you have been inactive till now, you can start with some mild physical activity and gradually build it up, increasing the duration, frequency and intensity over time.

Children, teenagers, young adults and the elderly can all benefit from becoming more active. So can women who are pregnant or are in their postpartum period and even people with limitations due to disease – just that they may need to take some extra precautions and seek some advice before attempting anything more than mild physical activity.

Physical Activity Recommendations for the Various Ages

5-17 years - It is recommended that children and teens 5–17 years of age have a minimum of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily. 60 minutes is the minimum recommended amount, more is better and will provide additional health benefits.

18-64 years - Adults 18–64 years of age are recommended to have a minimum of 150 minutes of moderately intense physical activity per week or a minimum of 75 minutes of vigorous activity throughout the week or an equivalent combination of the two (moderate and vigorous activity). All activity being at least in 10 minute chunks at a time.

Adults 65 years and above - The general recommendations for this age group are also the same as those for the 18-64 years age group although, since muscles, tissues and organs are no longer as efficient as in earlier years, physical activity can be modified accordingly, with less vigorous and gentler body movements (a lowered intensity of activity). If not able to do the recommended amount of physical activity due to health conditions, older adults can try to be as physically active as they are able.

Unless specific medical conditions indicate the contrary, these recommendations apply to all, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or

income level. They also apply to individuals with chronic non-communicable medical conditions not related to mobility e.g., hypertension, diabetes etc. and those with disabilities as well. So now there's really no excuse for sitting or lying around – it's time to get up and go out there.

We can see that all these recommendations point to a direct link between increasing physical activity and better health. We have been using the term “physical activity” over and over but what does this term mean? Does it refer only to “exercise”? Not necessarily. Physical activity would include all activities that involve movement of the body (including exercise). So you could be doing household chores, walking, cycling, running errands, gardening, farming etc. and that would be physical activity too.

Thus, we can broadly categorise physical activity into

1. Physical Labour
2. Physical Exercise

Physical Labour

When we say ‘labour’ we are referring to physical labour⁵.

Physical labour involves employing the body physically for the production and maintenance of physical facilities. Physical labour leads to some productivity - like walking or cycling and covering a distance (unlike walking on a treadmill or cycling in a gym). A variety of activities can come under ‘physical labour’ e.g., cleaning one's house or hostel room, washing clothes, washing dishes, walking to the college or work institution, gardening, etc. In all of these there is some productivity, some work output.

So, depending on your age and the physical condition of your body, you can engage in light, moderate or heavy physical labour. This will not only be helpful in keeping your body healthy and your being more productive but can also help you improve relationships with your family members by bonding with them better (e.g., when you offer to massage the legs of an elderly member of your family or to run errands for your spouse or parent etc.). This will be fulfilling not just for you but also for your family members.

When working with nature, the process is of course fulfilling for us (it helps meet our need for physical facility e.g., when we grow fruit trees, vegetables etc. and it also helps us have better health in the body); we can also make it fulfilling for nature by using cyclic processes, thereby enriching nature in the process. (We will discuss this in a little more detail when we come to health/harmony of the environment).

Physical Exercise

Physical Exercise⁶ refers to physical activity that is planned, structured, repetitive, and with the sole objective of improving or maintaining physical fitness i.e., the health of the body. It may be used to strengthen the musculoskeletal system, increase the flexibility of the muscles, improve blood circulation etc.

Here too, depending on one's age and condition of the body, one can engage in light, moderate or vigorous physical exercise. The elderly or those with a physical debilitation of the body can engage in light exercise like walking, stretching etc. As mentioned in the previous section on the daily routine, when walking outdoors in the fresh air, taking in the morning sunlight, walking barefoot in the grass etc. the body is also exposed to nature and this adds to the health benefits of the exercise. Therefore, walking outdoors is preferable to walking on a treadmill in a closed room.

Those who are younger or more fit can engage in moderate physical activity like brisk walking, jogging, light sports etc. while those very energetic and healthy can engage in more vigorous physical activity like outdoor games and sports, running at higher speed and so on.

Health benefits of regular Physical Labour and Exercise^{7, 8, 9, 10, 11}

1. Helps in the growth and strengthening of the body.
2. Physical movement helps improve bowel clearance, making the body light and agile.
3. The body's digestive capacity improves.

4. Movement of the muscles improves the blood circulation in the body leading to a glowing skin complexion.
5. The immunity of the body increases and thus it becomes resistant to minor colds, coughs, fevers and various other common infections.
6. Whether you're overweight and want to lose weight or whether you're underweight and wish to gain weight, labour and exercise, combined with the right intake and routine are helpful.

Cautions and recommendations regarding Physical Exercise^{12, 13, 14, 15}

Though physical labour and exercise have many benefits as we just saw, you also need to be cautious about when you exercise (e.g., in relation to your last meal, the season of the year etc. and of course the factors such as age, strength of the body etc. which we had already mentioned). Some of these cautions are mentioned below.

In the winter and spring season, a person with a strong and healthy body and one who eats nutritious food on a regular basis, can do vigorous exercise. It is said that such a person can exercise up to half his physical strength. What is meant by half of one's physical strength? That is, exercising to the point when there is an increase in the respiration or breath, the formation of droplets of perspiration on the forehead, nose, axilla, etc., a lightness of the body and an accompanying sensation of dryness in the mouth. If there is a feeling of tightness or obstruction in the chest, or difficulty in breathing, it is probably a good time to stop. Physical exercise will no longer be beneficial to the body if done in excess or to the point of over-exhaustion. When possible, it is beneficial to massage the whole body after physical exercise¹⁶.

Needless to say, in one whose body is weak or in one who has not been eating food that is nurturing for the body, this should not be attempted without starting first with light physical labour and exercise and building it up gradually while at the same time correcting the intake and routine.

In seasons other than winter and spring (e.g., in the summer or rainy seasons) and for those with a weak physical body, gentler and lighter exercises are suggested.

When not to do Physical Exercise^{17, 18,19}:

It is suggested to postpone moderate and vigorous physical labour and exercise in the following conditions

1. Severe indigestion
2. Just after a meal
3. If you're feeling very tired and exhausted
4. If you have severe cough, shortness of breath, lung disease, bleeding disorders etc.
5. When you're very hungry or very thirsty
6. When you're in the grip of negative emotions like anger, grief, fear etc.

Thus, physical activity can be incorporated in our day-to-day routine with the help of labour and exercise and this can lead to better health in the body. Even when the body is not in very good condition (i.e., is sick or infirm) and you are unable to exercise, you may find that even a little time spent outdoors doing very light physical labour, working with nature, helps you feel better and brings the body a shade closer to harmony leading it to work more efficiently. But then, like all else, this is a proposal for you to try out and verify for yourself.

Supportive Practices at Work/College

There are times during the day when you are active and the physical activity helps you keep better health but then there are also many times during the day when you are not doing any physical activity e.g., during your work day – when you are at school or college or working in an institution. Long work days can lead to disharmony and imbalance in the body from time to time. Can you do something for better health even at these times? We will look at some of the supportive practices that you can do to help maintain the harmony and keep the body healthy even when you are not physically active.

If you are a student, you may be spending a lot of time sitting and bending

over text books, writing notes, working on the laptop or computer, typing etc. be it in the classroom, library, hostel or at home (studies have shown that 83% of students sit at a desk for more than 10 hours a day²⁰). The same is true even when one graduates and takes up a desk job.

Long hours of working like this have been associated with aches and pains in the wrists, shoulders and back, eye strain, headaches and problems like carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS), computer vision syndrome (CVS) etc.

So, what can you do to minimise such problems when working or studying?

Take short breaks:

Being inactive and sitting for long periods at a stretch is not good for the health of the body. For instance, it prevents the smooth and efficient circulation of blood (there is stagnation of blood in the lower limbs when one sits with legs dangling down for long periods without movement). Being inactive on a daily or routine basis is also linked with several lifestyle disorders like heart disease, hypertension etc. It's a good idea then to take short breaks every now and then – say every 40 minutes or so. Even if the break is just for a few minutes- getting up for a glass of water, going to the toilet etc., even these short breaks help. You could even set a reminder for yourself on the watch or mobile 'phone for this.

If you're not able to get up and take a break, you can do simple movement exercises like moving your fingers and toes, ankles and wrists, rolling the shoulders forward and back etc. while sitting at the desk. Such movements help improve the blood circulation in the body.

From time to time, take your eyes off the book, laptop or computer you're working on and gaze up at the far distance – this will relieve the eye strain that stems from constantly focusing your eyes on the book or screen you're looking at.

Maintain the right sitting posture:

An erect posture helps keep the spine in normal alignment by balancing the weight distribution of the body directly or indirectly^{21, 22}. Such a balanced posture benefits the physical growth and development of the body.

It is easy for things to slip by when one is busy so try and pay attention to your body posture every now and then when you are working or studying.

Here are a few posture-related tips²³:

1. Check to see that your back is erect and supported and the legs and elbows are at 90 degrees to the trunk.
2. Sitting flush on the floor with legs crossed, one can sit comfortably for long stretches of time - this is one posture that supports the distribution of body weight in a balanced manner. So, you may want to sit in this posture whenever possible.
3. If sitting on a chair, make sure that the chair provides a good, solid back support and adjust the chair height so that the knees are at the same level as the hips, when sitting. Keep the feet either flat on the floor or on a footrest (this will help reduce pressure on the lower back).
4. If possible, use chairs with arm rests on which the arms can rest gently without having to tense the shoulders. Keep your shoulders relaxed and elbows close to the sides of the body to avoid strain,

If the arm rest can go below the desk, it will be preferable as you will be nearer to the desk and everything on the desk will be within your reach.

5. You may want to keep frequently used items in front of you and within reach so that you don't have to contort the body into unnatural and uncomfortable postures in order to reach them. Avoid having to bend or twist the neck or trunk frequently.

Proper illumination (Lighting)

Proper illumination in the work or study area is a must to avoid eye strain and to ensure the working efficiency of the eyes till the late ages. As discussed earlier, light should fall on the work place in such a way that there are no shadows formed in the field of vision.

Creating a comfortable study/work Environment

A comfortable and well-planned study area will help you concentrate so

that you can focus on your work at hand without getting disturbed while also ensuring the environment that is most conducive to the health of your body,

Key aspects, some of which have already been mentioned are:

A spacious and un-cramped area that is free from noise and other disturbances, comfortable seating arrangement, good lighting and proper ventilation. Adequate ventilation in the study area is a must - poor ventilation leads to poor indoor air quality (IAQ)²⁴ which not only impacts the health of the body negatively^{25, 26} but is also associated with lower academic achievement²⁷.

Furniture especially the chair you use to sit on, should be practical, suitable, comfortable and durable.

Tips on Working with Computers:

For many of us, working with computers may form a very large part of our work day. Routinely working at a computer or laptop for long hours at a stretch can pose some health issues. The following tips regarding the various parts of your work station may be helpful:

Chair^{28, 29}:

A chair that is well-designed and appropriately adjusted is an essential element of a safe and productive computer workstation.

Ideally, the backrest of the chair should conform to the natural curvature of your spine and provide adequate lumbar support to the spine.

Ensure that the seat of the chair is comfortable and allows your feet to rest flat on the floor or on a footrest.

Adjust the seat height so that your elbows are roughly the same height as the keyboard.

If the chair has an armrest, see that it allows your shoulders to relax and your elbows to stay close to your body.

Monitor^{30, 31, 32}

- Place the computer monitor directly in front of you and at least 20 inches away.
- Place the monitor in such a way that the top part of the screen is at or just below your eye level.
- Adjust the viewing distance from your eyes to the screen so that it is comfortable to read.
- Ensure that there is no glare from the monitor and no reflections from light outside as these can strain your eyes. Over time, this leads to tired eyes and general fatigue.
- Adjust aspects like colour, brightness, font, and contrast to your own preference as per what is most comfortable for your viewing.
- Viewing the monitor for long periods of time may cause eye fatigue and dryness. Often one tends to blink less when viewing the monitor, so make sure that you stop, look away, and blink every now and then to moisten the eyes. Rest your eyes periodically by focusing on objects that are farther away (for example, focusing on a clock hanging on the wall 20 feet away)

Keyboard³³

- Select a keyboard that will help you to avoid awkward postures and contact stress.
- Place the keyboard directly in front of you.
- Ensure that your shoulders are relaxed and your elbows close to your body.
- Your wrists should be parallel to the ground (in-line with your forearms and hands)

Mouse^{34,35}

- Keep the mouse close to the edge of your keyboard so as to avoid having to stretch.

- Ensure that there is ample space for you to move the mouse freely
- Use a light touch when holding the mouse or pressing a key on it and avoid grasping the mouse in the same manner or using the same finger to press the keys.
- While using the mouse, try not to bend your hands up or sideways at the wrists to prevent strain.

Ensure that the lighting is adequate for reading the screen/working on documents. Maintain a comfortable temperature and fresh air flow by opening the windows, using a fan etc. if needed.

As mentioned earlier, the best way to avoid health risks due to long periods of physical inactivity when sitting in one place is to get up, take a quick short break and stretch your legs!

Test Your Understanding

1. What is the difference between labour and exercise? Give some examples of labour and exercise from your personal life.
2. Dust, sweep and swab your room. Write down your observations regarding the state of health of your body e.g., the flexibility of the body (or the lack of it). Do this activity of labour for the entire week. Besides a clean and tidy room, do you also notice some changes in the body? For instance, do you notice a change in the flexibility of the body, change in appetite/hunger, level of alertness during the day etc.? Make a table like the one given below and write down your observations daily for the entire week. After a week of this activity, what could you deduce regarding the impact of this activity on your health?

Day of the week	Dusting, sweeping, swabbing	Flexibility in the body	Appetite/Hunger	Alertness during the day
Sunday	Yes/Done	Able/Not able to sit on ankles with ease	Hungry/Not hungry for meals during the day	Felt alert/dull and lazy during the day

3. Incorporate ~ half an hour of exercise (e.g., running/jogging, playing

football/hockey/badminton etc.) in your daily routine. Write down your observations regarding the impact of this exercise on the health of your body e.g., on your appetite, your mood, level of alertness during the day, incidence of aches and pains, muscle cramps/neck stiffness, back stiffness etc. Do this exercise regularly for a minimum of one week and note down your observations daily for the entire week. In the one week did you notice any significant change in the health of your body? What conclusion could you draw from your observations?

Chapter 20

Body Postures to Regulate External and Internal Organs

Besides becoming aware of and correcting our intake and daily routine, besides doing labour and exercise regularly, we can also rely on other practices that can be done on a regular basis to maintain the body harmony e.g., the practice of maintaining the body in certain postures- postures that help regulate all the body organs. The ancient Indian practice of Yoga which has been traditionally practised in India since centuries and is now recognised the world over for its health benefits is one such method of staying healthy and keeping the body fit.

Program for Health - Regulating Body Organs

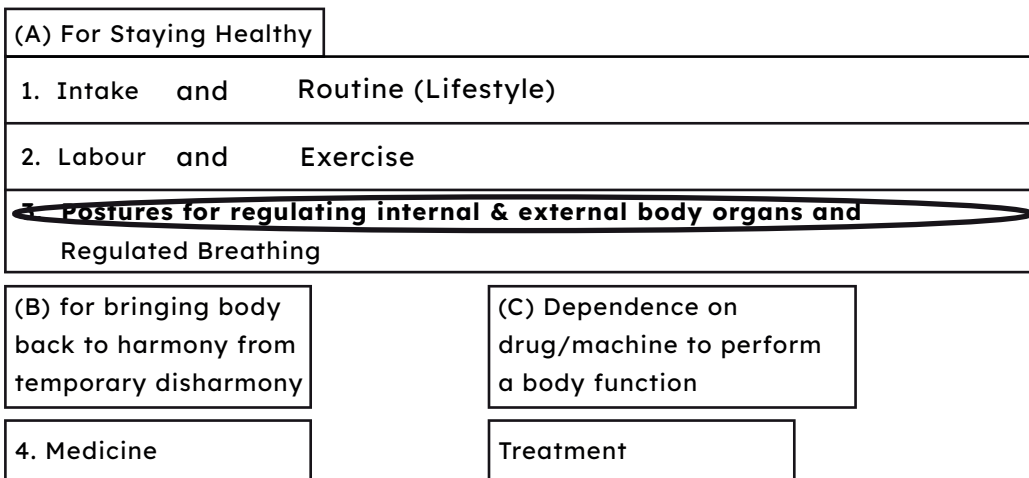


Figure - 20.1

Unlike ordinary exercise, Yogasanas (yogic body postures) go way beyond strengthening the muscles and increasing the blood circulation. Specific postures stimulate specific organs and organ systems of the body³⁶. They enhance the functions of the various organs and can even correct disturbances in them.



Figure - 20.2

15 minutes of yoga daily can make a remarkable difference to your energy level, vitality, alertness, skin tone etc. And you can easily do this outdoors, in your room – wherever. It requires no fancy equipment either – all it takes is a mat spread out on the floor/ground!

Yoga is much more than just a means to better health in the body. While movement is what brings about the benefits of exercise, yoga is about

being still and yet being very alert³⁷. Having no movement of the body and being still in every posture is the key to achieving stability. Being still and keeping the body in one place without movement will also help you pay attention to and focus on your Self.

Though yoga is much more than postures and a practice for staying healthy, here we will limit ourselves to a very brief mention of just a few of the many and varied yogic postures and the health benefits that can be attained through their regular practice. Of course, in order for you to benefit from yoga, you would need to learn it under the guidance of one who is adept and then practice it on a regular basis.

Here are just a few of the many health benefits of yoga³⁸ when practised regularly:

- Yoga improves body strength and flexibility – it strengthens the bones, makes the joints more flexible and tones the muscles
- It improves blood circulation in the body
- Makes the body look and feel younger than its age
- Helps relax and calm the mind leading to better sleep
- Stillness in specific postures helps balance and stability in the body³⁹ (e.g., “veerabhadrasana” or the ‘warrior pose’⁴⁰)

- Certain postures specifically help improve digestion - e.g., “pavanmuktasana (helps get rid of and prevent gas related problems of the stomach, acidity etc.)⁴¹; e.g., “vajrasana” (prevents indigestion, gas, constipation and acidity)⁴². The vajrasana is the only yogic posture that is recommended to be practised soon after a meal.
- The “sarvangasana” posture helps activate and rejuvenate the thyroid gland⁴³.

There are thousands of such yogic postures that have been shown to be extremely effective in keeping the body healthy but we will not delve deeper since that is beyond the scope of this book.

One thing that can be mentioned here is that if there is just one yogic exercise you do in a day, you can choose to do the “surya namaskar” or “sun salutation”. This is like a complete exercise of all the body parts - the joints, the internal organs, the spine, the muscles etc. all in a compact, brief exercise of just a few minutes⁴⁴.

Test Your Understanding

1. What is yoga? Make a list of the health benefits of a practice like yoga.
2. If you haven't already done so, incorporate a minimum of 15-20 minutes of the practice of yoga postures in your daily routine. During the course of the day, do you notice any change in the body? Continue the activity for the entire week and record your observations e.g., a change in any of the following -
 - your appetite (hunger)
 - the number of hours you need to sleep
 - how cold or warm you feel
 - how alert or dull and lazy you feel, the colour of your skin etc.
 - any other change you could observe (e.g., a change in mood)

Over a longer period of 1-2 months, you may also be able to notice a change in the incidence/frequency of falling sick with colds, coughs etc. If so, note down all these observations too.

3. What are the specific postures that help in improving the digestion of the body? With the help of a teacher proficient in postures (yoga) learn the sequence of postures referred to as the 'sun salutation'. How does this series of postures help keep the body healthy? Incorporate this in your daily regimen of postures.

Chapter 21

Breath Regulation

So far we have spoken of the role of the intake, the daily routine, labour and exercise and the use of postures (as in yoga) for staying healthy. We now come to the next significant practice that you can do in order to stay healthy - the regulation of breath, one example of which is 'pranayama'. As with yoga and its postures, pranayama too is a practice with far deeper ramifications than merely an impact on the physical health of the body but here we will speak largely only of its health benefits.

Program for Health - Regulating Breathing

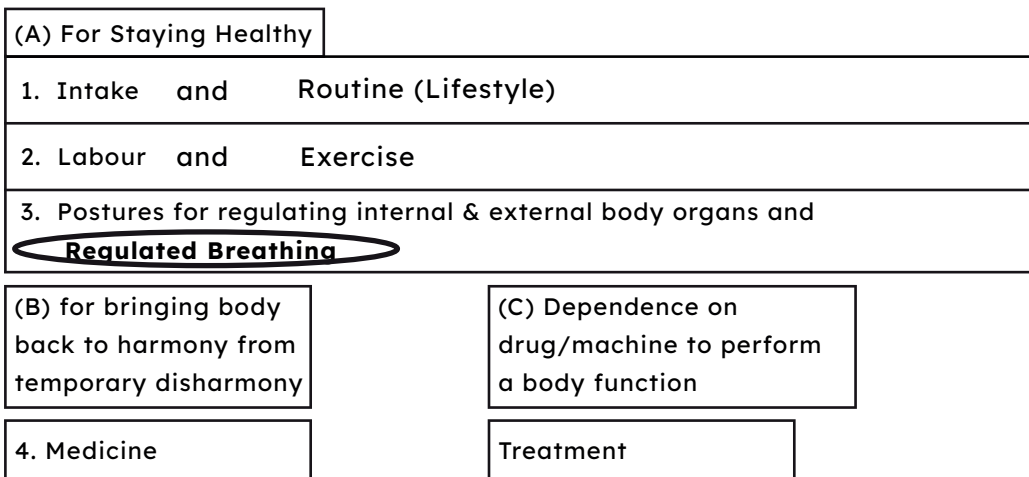


Figure - 21.1

Regulation of the breath (as with pranayama), can have a tremendous and powerful harmonising effect on the body. Essentially, pranayama is a multitude of various select breathing exercises that one can do - regulate the breath and through it, regulate the various organs and organ systems of the entire body.

We all know that the oxygen from the air we breathe in is trapped in the lungs; this oxygen is used by all the different parts of the body and the

carbon-di-oxide released from all the body cells as waste is then thrown out of the body – again, through the lungs.

The average total lung capacity of an adult human male is about 6 litres⁴⁵. In our normal day to day breathing, we use a very small percentage (barely 20%) of this total lung capacity because of our shallow breathing⁴⁶. When the breath is shallow, many of the alveoli (air sacs) in the lungs, remain collapsed and unused. It is through the walls of the alveoli that the oxygen is carried by the blood to the various body tissues. If the alveoli are unused, that much less oxygen is transported to the tissues. Even when we do exercise at maximum intensity, we use only 70% of our total lung capacity⁴⁷.

Pranayama, on the other hand, opens up many more alveoli (air sacs) in the lungs, increasing our oxygen intake and increasing our lung capacity to far greater extent than is possible with exercise (even exercise at maximum intensity). Some of the resulting visible benefits of pranayama are:

- Enhanced cognitive performance - increased ability to pay undivided attention and focus to every task performed resulting in an increased ability to concentrate for extended periods of time and this reflects as increased creativity, increased grasping power and increased memory.
- Improved quality of sleep – due to its harmonising effect on the body and also due to its calming impact on the mind, breath regulation exercises can help you to have better and more restful sleep
- Reduced stress and stress related illnesses e.g., hypertension, anxiety neuroses etc.
- Reduction in high blood pressure
- Improved body immunity

Pranayama goes beyond organs and organ systems; it impacts every cell of the body, helping to regenerate and revitalise each and every cell^{48,49}. It is meant to help tap the unexplored and dormant physical and mental potential, ultimately paving the way to an experience of the deeper dimension within.

The practice of pranayama, when done regularly and consistently even if for 15-20 minutes in a day can help you experience many of the health benefits

listed above. It is important to note however that the breath regulation exercises are best learnt under the guidance of one who is adept at them and not to be experimented with on one's own.

Test Your Understanding

1. What do you understand by the term 'pranayama' or breath regulation?
2. What are the benefits of doing regular breath regulation/'pranayama' exercises?
3. With the help of a teacher proficient in postures and breath regulation, learn how to do breath regulation exercises and practise them and the postures regularly (daily) for 15-20 minutes. Are you able to observe any changes in your body? Note down your observations daily for one week (e.g., is there any change in the flexibility of the body, any change in your appetite for food, any change in alertness, in your mood during the day, any change in the frequency of minor problems like aches and pains, muscle cramps, neck stiffness, body pains etc).

What conclusions are you able to draw from your experience and observations?

Chapter 22

Attending to Body Signals (Urges that Should not be Suppressed)

We have spoken about some of the things we need to pay attention to as part of the program for maintaining health in the body (the right intake, a daily routine in accordance with the cycles in nature, labour, exercise, the use of postures and breath regulation).

We also spoke about the self-organisation of the body. Let us now look at some more proposals pertaining to the self- organisation of the body. In order to maintain its harmony, the body generates some signals (as a part of its natural self-organisation). When you (i.e., the Self) pay attention to them, you recognise these signals as ‘urges’ e.g., the urge to pass urine, the urge to sneeze or cough, the urge to have a bowel movement, the urge to sleep etc.

When you pay attention to these signals and give instructions to the body to do what is needed to maintain the body harmony, the harmony and balance in the body is maintained (e.g., giving instruction to the body to sneeze when you have the urge to do so, going to sleep when you have the urge to sleep etc.). Not only are the physiological demands of the body fulfilled by this but the body is also able to get rid of unwanted substances and toxins that may have built up within it – e.g., when you give instruction to the body to have a bowel movement in response to the urge to do so, waste matter is removed from the body. These signals/ urges thus help the body to stay in a state of harmony and balance. Therefore, it is a good idea to go along with these signals when they arise⁵⁰.

When you do not pay attention to these signals, when you ignore them or you do not give appropriate instructions to the body in response to them, it may result in increasing disharmony in the body (i.e., if you suppress these urges, you prevent the release of accumulated toxins and waste matter from

the body and this results in disharmony in the body). Many diseases have been linked to the forceful expedition and/or suppression of such urges⁵¹.

Body Signals/Urges that you can aid (or at least not suppress):

Signal/Urges to urinate, defecate, release flatus or to vomit

Signal/Urges to sneeze, belch, yawn or cough

Signal/Urges of hunger, thirst or need for sleep at night

Signal/Urges to breathe rapidly when overexerting

Signal/Urges to shed tears when overwhelmed with emotion etc.

Let us go over these one by one.

Urge to pass urine:

When urine formed in the kidneys travels to the urinary bladder in the body, progressively filling it up and the tension in the bladder walls rises beyond a certain threshold, the signal generated in the body in response to this can be read by you (the Self) and interpreted by you as the need to pass urine (urge to urinate). When you pay attention to this urge to urinate and give instructions to the body accordingly, it results in the passage of urine.

You will notice that often, despite your attention being drawn to this signal, you are able to delay acting on this urge for some time (e.g., when you are in a class/meeting and do not wish to leave before the class/ meeting ends) and while it is okay to do this occasionally, it is not advisable to make this into a habit or do it frequently. Suppressing this urge may not only cause pain in the lower abdomen (due to a very full bladder) but may also result in the urine accumulated in the bladder attempting to backtrack into the ureters (the tubes connecting the bladder to the kidneys). This is because the urine collected in the bladder is unable to flow down and out of the body and hence tries to flow in the opposite direction i.e., upwards into the ureters.

Frequent stagnation of urine in the bladder and ureters in this manner invites infection in the collected urine leading to fever, chills, pain and burning when passing urine etc. (the symptoms of urinary infection). Ultimately, frequent

urinary tract infections may even lead to kidney damage. There may also be associated formation of stones in the ureters and kidneys.

Thus, it is important to pay attention to the urge to urinate and make it a habit to do so at the earliest.

Urge to defecate (have a bowel movement):

When waves of contraction pass through the large intestines (referred to as ‘peristaltic movements’), waste matter or faeces is moved from the proximal part of the large intestine into the rectum (the distal-most part of the large intestine, just before the anus). When the rectum is filled with faeces and the walls of the rectum are stretched beyond a certain threshold, the signal generated in the body can be appreciated by you as the urge to defecate or have a bowel movement. When you give instructions to the body accordingly (contraction of the rectum and, at the same time, relaxation of the anal sphincter), it results in a bowel movement.

If you suppress the urge to defecate, it causes pain in the abdomen and anal region but more importantly, this causes the retention of faeces (waste matter and toxins) and flatus (wind) in the abdomen. Because the flatus is unable to go down and out of the body through the normal route, it starts moving upwards in the body resulting in a bloated abdomen, a feeling of obstruction, as if a weight is pressing on the chest and in headaches. In fact, voluntarily suppressing the urge to defecate is almost like setting up a reverse peristalsis or contractile movement in the intestines in the opposite direction and this has been shown to delay the downward movement of food from the stomach to the intestines (a delay in gastric emptying) in normal individuals; this “cologastric brake” may well be the reason for upper abdominal symptoms in people with constipation⁵².

The retention of faeces also results in a headache, runny nose and cramps in the calf muscles^{53, 54, 55}. If the urge to have a bowel movement is suppressed frequently, it leads to chronic constipation and a whole host of other symptoms stemming from this!

Needless to say, it is best to respond to the urge as soon as you can.

Urge to pass flatus (gas):

Gas in the gastrointestinal tract may originate from any of three sources:

1. Air swallowed in through the mouth – most of this is a mixture of nitrogen and oxygen and is expelled out of the body by belching (see below).
2. Gas formed in the gut as a result of bacterial action – Bacteria, acting on food residue (mostly in the large intestine) form gases (carbon dioxide, methane and hydrogen)⁵⁶. These gases or flatus then move further down the digestive tract, to the rectum and are brought out through the anus⁵⁷.
3. Gas diffusing into the gastrointestinal tract from the blood stream – this is a minute amount.

If you voluntarily suppress the urge to pass flatus, it may lead to the retention of gas and further, may lead to retention of urine and stool too, causing constipation, fatigue, weakened digestion, pain and distension in the abdomen, discomfort in the chest/region of the heart and even poor vision^{58, 59}.

Not only can you pay attention to these signals of excessive gas in the body and give the necessary instructions to the body but you can also pre-empt such conditions by proactively getting rid of excess formation of gas in the digestive tract (e.g., by sitting in the ‘Vajrasana’ pose soon after eating a meal or with the help of the ‘Pavanmuktaasana’ (as mentioned earlier in the part on ‘Yoga’)

Urge to vomit:

Vomiting is another way of getting rid of unwanted substances from the body – in this case, from the upper gastrointestinal (GI) tract i.e., the food pipe (oesophagus), the stomach and the duodenum (the most proximal part or first part of the small intestine).

Whenever any part of the upper GI tract is over distended (bloated) or extremely irritated (e.g., when a substance like alcohol is consumed and it irritates the stomach lining or when you eat extremely spicy food or have excessive acidity), you may have the urge to vomit. If this urge is suppressed, the body is unable to get rid of the irritant in the stomach or small intestine

and this of course results in untoward health consequences for the body – it may cause heartburn i.e., a burning sensation in the chest region, headache, increased acid and heat in the body resulting in a black/dark pigmentation of the face, itching, skin rashes, lack of an appetite, nausea and even diseases of the eyes, cough, respiratory disorders, anaemia, fever, skin diseases etc.^{60,61}.

When you pay attention to this urge and go ahead and vomit instead of suppressing the urge, the body is able to get rid of the unwanted substances and this helps it to return to harmony faster and more efficiently.

Urge to sneeze:

In response to irritation in the nasal passages, be it due to dust, pollen or other irritants, the body generates signals which you decipher as an urge to sneeze. When you sneeze, a large amount of air passes rapidly through the nose, helping to clear the nasal passages of the foreign matter that was causing the irritation⁶². Once the substance leading to irritation is removed, there is no further urge to sneeze.

Suppressing this urge to sneeze may result in a headache and ailments like torticollis (rigidity in the neck), weakness of the sense organs and, at times, even facial paralysis^{63,64}. Research studies have also shown that suppressing a sneeze and thereby obstructing the normal passage of air through the nose and out of the body may cause the air to move to other areas of the body which is not normal for the body. This disharmony in the body may express itself in the form of conditions like pneumo-mediastinum (a collection of pockets of air in the area of the chest) and cervico-facial emphysema (a collection of pockets of air in the face-neck area)⁶⁵.

Whenever you have the urge to sneeze, if you merely allow the sneeze to occur without voluntarily trying to suppress it, you can easily prevent the unwanted and unnecessary consequences to the body mentioned above.

Urge to belch/have an eructation:

Belching or burping is the process by which excess or unwanted air from the digestive tract is expelled out through the mouth. This excess air usually

results from excess air being swallowed into the stomach. But for this normal protective mechanism of burping, the stomach would have been extremely over distended each time you over ate! Thus the signal that translates to an urge to belch is a physiological mechanism by which the body can vent gas from the stomach.

If you suppress the urge to belch or burp, it may lead to hiccoughs, difficulty breathing, stomach bloating, loss of appetite, tremors and even a disruption in the normal functioning of the heart^{66, 67, 68}.

Urge to yawn:

Why do you yawn? You may have noticed that you tend to yawn when you are tired, sleepy or bored. One theory is that we tend to yawn when the body is short on oxygen and yawning helps the body to take in a larger quantity of oxygen⁶⁹. It is quite possible that we don't yet know the full story but whatever be the reason, here also, you may be able to see that the body generates a signal and you interpret that signal as an urge to yawn. If you pay heed to the signal, you send the necessary instructions to the body.

Though yawning may seem like a simple enough activity, even this simple and common activity is a complex series of events involving movement in various parts of the body - opening of the mouth, a deep inspiration or breath in, a short period of cessation of the breath (apnoea), followed by expiration (breath out)⁷⁰!

If you do not pay heed to this urge to yawn and, instead, keep suppressing it habitually, it may cause you to have a headache and even more severe forms of disharmony. So the next time you have the urge to yawn, open wide and go ahead (though you may want to cover the mouth with a handkerchief in public places!).

Urge to cough:

For the body to take in air efficiently and effectively, it is important that its airways be clear and free from foreign matter. Cough is an important mechanism by which secretions and particulate matter are cleared from the body's airways.

Cough is triggered when cough receptors in the pharynx (back of the throat), trachea (main airway) and its main branches as also those in the more distal smaller airways get irritated/stimulated⁷¹. The airways are highly sensitive and the slightest amount of foreign matter may trigger irritation in them, leading to the cough reflex⁷². Though referred to as a ‘reflex’, here too you will be able to see that the body generates the signal and you pay attention to that signal, interpreting it as the urge to cough.

When you cough, not only are the body’s airways cleared but also, the inhalation of particles like foreign matter, secretions, etc. (which may have caused harm to the body) is prevented.

If you suppress the urge to cough, it can lead to accumulation of secretions and other irritants in the airways and this can precipitate asthma, hiccoughs, lack of appetite, discomfort, distress in the chest area etc.⁷³ (for the same reason, it is best to avoid taking cough suppressants i.e., medications that suppress cough).

Hunger:

“Hunger” is said to be an intrinsic desire for food and has been defined as the sensation pertaining to the need for food⁷⁴ - the sensation takes place in the body; the interpretation of the sensation as hunger occurs in the Self. Besides being associated with a craving for food, hunger is also associated with the rhythmic contraction of the stomach muscles and a sense of restlessness such that if one is hungry enough, usually any type of food will do. Is a good appetite the same as hunger? Not quite.

Appetite also refers to a desire for food but this term is often used for the preferential seeking out of a particular type of food⁷⁵. You may have noticed this difference in yourself - that you seem to have a great appetite for a particular type of food and yet appear to not be hungry enough for another type!

Hunger ‘pangs’ (signals) are a sign that the body needs food. When you pay attention to these signals you give the body the necessary instructions to eat food. What if you ignore these hunger pangs? The body then continues

to generate these signals for a while till they eventually die down for some time. However, ignoring hunger signals frequently is not advisable as this may lower the body metabolism and, as a result, lead to other associated problems. You may also become grouchy and irritable when hungry!

The long term and frequent ignoring of hunger signals leads to more severe problems in the body and the inadequate intake of food over prolonged periods of time may even lead to psychological disturbances (disharmony in the Self).

Thirst:

As mentioned earlier, water is essential for the body (the body is 72% water). Lack of water in the body results in dryness in the various parts of the body. One signal generated by the body in such a condition is a dryness of the mucous membranes of the mouth and oesophagus. This is a signal that is interpreted by you as ‘thirst’ - the dry and parched sensation in the mouth and throat that you associate with a craving to drink something, usually to drink water (an indicator that the body is low on water). Your role is to pay attention to this signal and drink water in a timely manner.

Two things worth noting here are—

1. The signal for thirst lags behind the need of the body for water i.e., the body is already water deprived by the time it has the signal for thirst (dryness of mouth etc.) hence pay heed to the signal
2. The elderly appear to have a decreased sensation of thirst (or it may be that they pay less attention to the thirst signals in the body); this, coupled with the fact that with advancing age, the body appears to have a higher requirement for water puts the elderly at a much higher risk for dehydration (something to remember especially if you have elderly members in the family)

If you don't pay attention to the sensation of thirst or if you suppress the urge to drink water, it leads to further dryness of the throat and mouth, weakness and, in severe cases, dehydration and exhaustion. One may even feel discomfort in the chest or faint (become unconscious).

Water or cooling demulcent drinks (e.g., mint water), when taken early on, can help prevent such situations^{76, 77, 78}.

Urge to Sleep:

As we saw in the chapter on daily routine, sleep is the time when the body goes through the processes of repair, regeneration and detoxification, correcting disharmony and coming back into harmony.

So, when you have the urge to sleep at night, go ahead and do so. Traditional health systems mention that if you suppress this urge, you are likely to be drowsy during the day; you may also feel lethargic, tired, have heaviness in the head and eyes, sometimes a frank headache and pain in the entire body^{79,80}. Research in Modern medicine has also demonstrated that sleep deprivation has deleterious effects on a number of bodily functions^{81, 82}.

All such issues can be prevented if you just follow the simple rule of 'sleep when you are sleepy'.

Urge to breathe faster and heavier after exertion:

At the end of a normal cycle of breathing in and breathing out at rest, a healthy person can hold his/her breath for an average period of up to about 50 seconds. After that, one tends to feel suffocated and has a strong desire to breathe again. This signal of suffocation occurs in the body when the carbon-di-oxide level in the body builds up and this is interpreted by you as a strong urge to breathe again and take in a fresh supply of oxygen. When you do strenuous physical activity or vigorous exercise, this build-up of carbon-di-oxide occurs far more rapidly. Thus, soon after vigorous exercise, you will find that you feel compelled to take in another breath very soon after the last one i.e., you are able to hold the breath for a much shorter duration than you could at rest. Why is this so?

To do a lot of strenuous activity, you need a lot of energy and this energy comes from oxygen - the air (oxygen) taken in by the body, through various metabolic pathways, acts as the fuel that generates energy (and in the process, carbon-di-oxide is formed). The more strenuous the activity, more is the energy required and hence, more is the requirement of oxygen. As the

oxygen is consumed more rapidly, carbon-di-oxide also gets accumulated faster and this triggers the urge to take in a fresh breath.

If you compare the oxygen consumption of an average person with one who is doing regular strenuous activity you can get an idea of the large amounts of oxygen required and used up during exercise – for instance, the normal oxygen consumption for a young man at rest is about 250 ml/min. while in a male marathon runner, this may increase to >5000ml/min. (a 20 fold increase when compared to the resting state!)⁸³.

Thus, it is important not to suppress the urge to breathe rapidly and deeply after exercise so that larger amounts of oxygen are taken in. Failing this (i.e., if you suppress this urge to breathe faster after exertion), it may result in a fainting spell or symptoms of more severe forms of disharmony in the body^{84, 85}.

Urge to shed tears:

For you to be able to see clearly through the eyes, continuous moistening of the cornea (the dome shaped front portion of the eye) occurs through the formation of tears. Tears not only moisten the cornea but also clear it of the many irritants that may fall in the eyes - by washing them away (you may have noticed that whenever the eyes are dry or there is some irritant in the eyes, you tend to blink more and have excessive formation of tears). Besides doing all this, tears also have another very important component - 'lysozyme' – an enzyme that can destroy bacteria. So each time you blink the eye, a thin 'tear film' develops on the cornea, keeping the eye moistened, free of irritants and free from bacteria (no wonder then that frequent blinking is recommended for keeping the eyes in good health).

When you are emotionally moved also, you tend to have the urge to shed tears – as human beings, we shed tears when we are sad, when we are happy, or otherwise emotionally moved. Crying is considered to be beneficial for health, bringing about immediate relief as also long-term benefits. On the other hand, withholding tears may have damaging health effects⁸⁶. It has also been found that crying may be associated with a rebound mechanism that facilitates the recovery of homeostasis (a return to the normal state of harmony and balance of the body)^{87, 88}.

Voluntarily suppressing tears, whether they be borne of grief or joy, may lead to rhinitis (runny nose), heaviness of the head, eye disorders, anorexia (loss of appetite) and giddiness^{89, 90, 91} and is not recommended.

Having discussed the significance of all the various body signals and our identification of them as the urges described above, you can probably appreciate why they are significant in maintaining the body harmony and why you should not suppress them. It is said that the suppression or forceful expulsion of these natural urges is responsible for the vast majority of diseases⁹². An essential feature of these natural signals/processes/urges is that they are inertial, i.e., inevitable, provided you do not interfere with them but instead respond appropriately to these signals.

Test Your Understanding

1. What are 'natural urges'? What is their significance/role in staying healthy?
2. List out some common natural urges that you have been able to identify in your own body and make a note of the ones you are paying attention to and going along with and the ones (if any) you are suppressing.
3. Why is it important not to suppress these natural urges? What happens if you suppress the natural urges? Explain with the help of five common examples you have been able to observe in yourself.

Chapter 23

Urges that Should be Transformed

Besides the exhaustive list of ‘urges’ that should not be suppressed (discussed in the previous chapter), there are also certain other types of ‘urges’ that are not useful and do need to be suppressed –or rather, they need to be transformed.

Given in the table below are some mental, verbal and physical urges. You may be giving in to some of these urges from time to time. Let us see how these urges impact us, why we need to transform them and what we need to do to try and transform these urges within ourselves.

Mental urges	Verbal (Speech related) urges	Physical urges
Fear	Harsh words	Violence towards others
Jealousy	Excess talking	Adultery
Greed	Backbiting	Persecution.
Grief	Lying and use of untimely words.	
Anger		
Vanity		
Shamelessness		
Attachment		
Malice etc.		

Mental Urges – Take a look at the list of mental urges given above. You may notice that all the mental urges in the list pertain to feelings that are not naturally acceptable to us. For instance, you can ask yourself whether fear is naturally acceptable to you, whether jealousy or greed or anger etc. are naturally acceptable to you and you will find that none of these emotions are naturally acceptable to you.

You will also notice that whenever you lack the right feeling, you have one of these types of negative feelings in yourself. For instance, when you lack the feeling of trust (a feeling that is naturally acceptable to you), you tend to have fear. Similarly, the feeling of jealousy is not naturally acceptable

to you. What is naturally acceptable to you is the feeling of affection. And when the feeling of affection is lacking in you, you are jealous.

In this manner you will see that each and every emotion listed in the mental urges column above is an emotion that is not naturally acceptable to you (or to anyone else for that matter) and all these emotions are a result of the lack of a feeling that is naturally acceptable to you. What is wrong in having such emotions that are not naturally acceptable to you? Well, it is quite evident that such feelings make you unhappy. Again, you can ask yourself the question – what makes you feel happy/comfortable within? Is it a feeling of trust or one of mistrust leading to fear of others in society and fear of the environment?

Of course, it is the feeling of trust that makes you happy/comfortable within because it is the feeling of trust that is in line with your natural acceptance, not mistrust or fear or anger; it is what allows you to be in harmony within. On the other hand, whenever you have a feeling that is not naturally acceptable to you, there is conflict within - you feel uncomfortable/unhappy and when you interact with others with this unhappiness, you make them unhappy too!

In other words,

Feelings not in line with the NA → Unhappiness in you → Unhappiness in the other

It must be clear from this discussion then that what is needed is a transformation of such feelings (feelings that are not naturally acceptable). And what does this transformation require? Since the unhappiness is due to a feeling not in line with the natural acceptance, what is required is to have a feeling that is naturally acceptable (i.e., the right feeling) and in order to have the right feeling at every moment, two things are required –

- Awareness of the feeling in your imagination at every moment (imagination = Desire/Feeling, Thought and Expectation; we discussed this in part two of this book)
- Awareness of the feeling that is naturally acceptable (you just need to refer to your natural acceptance and you will get the answer to this)

Once you are aware of the feeling you are having at any given moment and you are also aware of the feeling that makes you happy (be in harmony), you can, right then and there, choose to have the feeling that makes you happy/comfortable within/in harmony within. It's that simple.

And once you experience this for yourself, it becomes understanding for you (right understanding). Thus, the transformation of such mental urges requires the right understanding and right feeling.

Verbal Urges – Now let us look at the middle column. The urges listed here refer to verbal actions - behaviours in human-human interactions. You will be able to see that none of these behaviours is naturally acceptable to you (i.e., none of them is in line with your natural acceptance – you can refer to your natural acceptance right now and check this for yourself).

At times you may feel that you try your best and decide to have the right feeling and thought but a situation arises where the other says something to you in a harsh tone of voice or uses abusive language and again you fall into the same trap of behaviour that is not naturally acceptable to you. In fact, you are not alone in this; many people may feel this way. What to do in such situations? Let us see why this is happening.

When you have not ensured the right feeling within yourself, you tend to constantly seek happiness from outside in the form of pleasant sensations through the body or trying to get the right feeling from others and become angry or irritated when the other does not 'give' you the right feeling. But what if the right feeling was ensured within you and you were happy as a result of it? Then you would not need to seek happiness outside because you are already happy. Then how the other behaves does not bother you. If we ask you, when do you get angry, shout at others etc. when you are comfortable inside or when you are already feeling uncomfortable within? The answer is plain for you to see- only when you are in a 'bad mood', you tend to get angry; when you are in a 'good mood' you tend to let the other's behaviour pass without getting upset. Isn't this true for you?

So, though such behaviour is not naturally acceptable to you (not what you really want), yet you may find that you sometimes resort to some of these

behaviours. That's because even though you can see that this is not what you want, you may not be very clear about what it is that you really want (i.e., what is naturally acceptable to you) or you may not know how to make it happen or it could be both of these.

In the first case (not knowing what you want), you can get clarity on what it is you really want by referring to your natural acceptance.

In the second case (knowing what you want but not knowing how to make it happen), you can get clarity about this if you start paying attention to your feeling and checking if it is in line with the natural acceptance or not (rather than merely trying to change the behaviour or even just the thoughts).

Why is having the right feeling so important? Because if you merely try to change the behaviour by itself, it is not likely to be a very successful attempt – often it may be short lived and you may be unable to sustain the right behaviour (in line with your natural acceptance). This is because the feeling at the base of the imagination is itself not in line with the natural acceptance and it is the feeling at the base that is motivating or driving the thoughts which then result in the behaviour outside. Therefore, what needs to be done is to transform the feeling at the base of the imagination. When you have the right feeling, the right thoughts naturally flow from it as does the right behaviour and once the right feeling is ensured within, the behaviour/conduct also becomes definite (i.e., right behaviour in accordance with the right feelings and right thoughts).

So, transformation in behaviour requires a transformation within with the right understanding and right feeling in the Self. The same is true of the physical urges listed in the last column. To transform the physical urges or actions/behaviour, transformation needs to come about in the feeling within.

When you have the right feeling within (a feeling of relationship), you are able to see your relationship with other human beings. When you see your relatedness with the other, you take responsibility in the relationship, ensuring definiteness in your feeling and concern for the other; this makes

the physical urges listed above weaken and drop, resulting in the natural flow of conduct that is definite.

This means that you then have definite conduct regardless of whether the other is your family member, your neighbour, a rich person or a poor person, a person of your faith or another faith, a person with your ideology or a different ideology etc. and your definiteness of conduct is also independent of the other's behaviour (i.e., you have definite conduct even if the other misbehaves).

To summarise....

In day-to-day life you may face all sorts of situations that you may tend to classify into positive and negative circumstances. Some psychologists say that human beings have a tendency to be more attentive to, and to more thoroughly process and recall, negative information as compared to positive information⁹³. It is plain to see that recalling negative circumstances and becoming unhappy about them is certainly not useful.

Though you may tend to get influenced by circumstances around you, if you reflect on this, you will be able to see that happiness and unhappiness are your own creation – when you ensure the right feeling within yourself, you feel happy and respond to the situation outside while when you do not ensure the right feeling within, you feel unhappy and react to the situation outside (if you remember, we discussed this in part two of this book). Further, when you respond to others, it leads to happiness in them also while when you react, you make others also feel unhappy!

You can see that these negative urges related to thought, speech and action are of no use to you and need to be transformed. And how do you go about it? We have been saying this all along. You don't need to pay attention to the negative urges; rather, you need to pay attention to/observe what goes on in your imagination and then check if it is in line with your natural acceptance or not. When your imagination (feeling, thought and expectation) is in line with your natural acceptance, you have the right feeling and thought and are in harmony. You are then able to maintain the body in harmony and your behaviour (conduct) is also harmonious.

When you start paying attention to your thoughts and feelings, you will be able to see that when you ensure the right feeling within yourself (a feeling in line with your natural acceptance), the mental urges are automatically transformed (right thoughts are a natural consequence of the right feeling). As we think, so we do; when you have the right feeling and thought, it translates to right behaviour (right speech and action). So, in this way, all such negative urges can get transformed in a very simple and sustained manner.

Test Your Understanding

1. What are some of the urges that need to be transformed?
2. Observe some of these negative urges that may be there in you. When you go along with these negative urges, observe how you feel within. Are you happy/unhappy? On the basis of this observation, do you want to continue with the negative urge or do you want to change it?
3. How can you bring about a change in these urges/actions? Where would you focus – on the physical action through the body/on your thoughts and reasoning/on the natural acceptance and bringing your feeling, thought and behaviour in accordance with the natural acceptance such that your conduct becomes definite?

Chapter 24

Indicators of Health

Are you healthy? Have you asked yourself this question? If so, what is the answer you get?

We have been talking about staying healthy but how would you know if you are healthy i.e., when would you say that the body is in harmony - in good health? Are there any specific indicators that you can use or refer to in order to answer this question? There most certainly are.

The following are some indicators of good health. You can check and see if they are true for you:

1. You feel awake and alert the moment you wake up and have no trouble 'jumping' out of bed each morning
2. You have a good appetite - you feel hungry at meal times
3. You have proper and timely digestion and assimilation of food - you feel light and energised after eating
4. You have timely and proper elimination of waste from the body - you have a daily bowel movement before consuming any food or drinks. You also have regular and comfortable elimination of sweat and urine (and regular menstrual cycles in the case of girls and women).
5. You have a healthy proportion of muscle, bone and fat tissue - you are neither overweight nor emaciated.
6. Your body has a natural strength and immunity - it can withstand hot and cold climates and change of season easily without falling sick frequently
7. You have normal skin colour - a natural and healthy glow to the skin
8. Your body is flexible. It is able to obey the instructions you give to it and it can withstand physical exercise without difficulty
9. All your five sense organs are functioning normally and are not deteriorating (or are only minimally deteriorating) with age.
10. Your body is free from the onslaught of diseases

11. You fall asleep easily when you go to bed at night and enjoy a deep and restful sleep each night
12. You feel comfortable and happy within – you have the feeling of peace and contentment inside and a feeling of relationship for family members, friends, relatives, colleagues etc.

This last point in the list is the one of most importance because this demonstrates harmony (i.e., health) in the Self and only when the Self is healthy (in harmony) can it take responsibility for the health of the body and do so, efficiently.

Test Your Understanding

1. Make a list of all the indicators of good health.
2. Go back to part two of the book and redo the questionnaire on ‘Are you healthy’. Compare the result that you get now with the result you got then. Is there any change/difference in the result now? On the basis of this, are you healthy or unhealthy now?
3. Observe your current tendencies and habits that are not in line with keeping the body healthy. Chart out an action plan for what you can change right away and try to make one change every 3 weeks or so – You can categorise the changes as physical/behavioural and mental. Note down your endeavours – successful and unsuccessful.

Chapter 25

Early Indicators of Disharmony (Disease) in the Body and Bringing the Body Back to Harmony

So far we had been talking about how we can be healthy and stay healthy (A- Staying healthy).

Having looked at our intake, daily routine, labour and exercise and the use of specific practices for keeping the body healthy (use of postures for regulating the body organs as in yoga and the regulation of breath as in pranayama) we then went on to see how we can further help the body's attempts at staying healthy by paying attention to the signals of the natural urges and going along with them rather than suppressing them. We also spoke briefly about urges that are not useful for us and should be transformed and how we can do that. Last but not least we listed out the indicators of good health so we can gauge if we are healthy or not.

If we follow all the above-mentioned practices, the body is likely to stay healthy (in harmony) with all organs functioning efficiently. But what if we fail to do so and the body does go into disharmony? What then? Well then we first need to evaluate how bad things are – is the disharmony mild, moderate or severe?

Why do we need to know this? This is important to know so that we can decide our approach to correcting the disharmony. If the body is in mild disharmony, just maintaining the practices mentioned in (A) – 'Staying healthy' regularly and using gentle home remedies are likely to be sufficient to bring the body back in harmony. For instance, if you have a mild headache and you pay attention to it, all you may need to do is to drink extra water and that may be sufficient to clear the headache. The whole process takes very little extra effort.

If the disharmony in the body is more than mild, it is most likely that the

body has been in disharmony for a while (it may have started as a minor issue but when we didn't pay attention to it at the time, it slowly built up and became more and more of a problem). For instance, in the above example, if you didn't pay attention to a headache resulting from an inadequate intake of water and didn't drink the extra water required by the body, the headache could persist for longer; if you got into the habit of drinking less water, the digestive process would not be able to work as efficiently resulting in constipation; urination would also be less leading to a stagnation of urine in the bladder and this may result in a urinary tract infection!

Now these compounding problems will lead to the added symptoms of fever, lack of appetite, burning sensation when passing urine...and so on. Just as all this disharmony took time to build up in the body, it may now take a lot more time for things to get corrected and for the body to get back to harmony - and it will take a lot more time and effort on your part. In fact, once problems get compounded in this way, the help of a health care professional may have to be sought and medication may have to be taken in order for the body to come back to harmony. So the minor problem that could have been sorted out by you at home, now requires a doctor, laboratory tests, medication...perhaps hospitalisation!

Program for Health

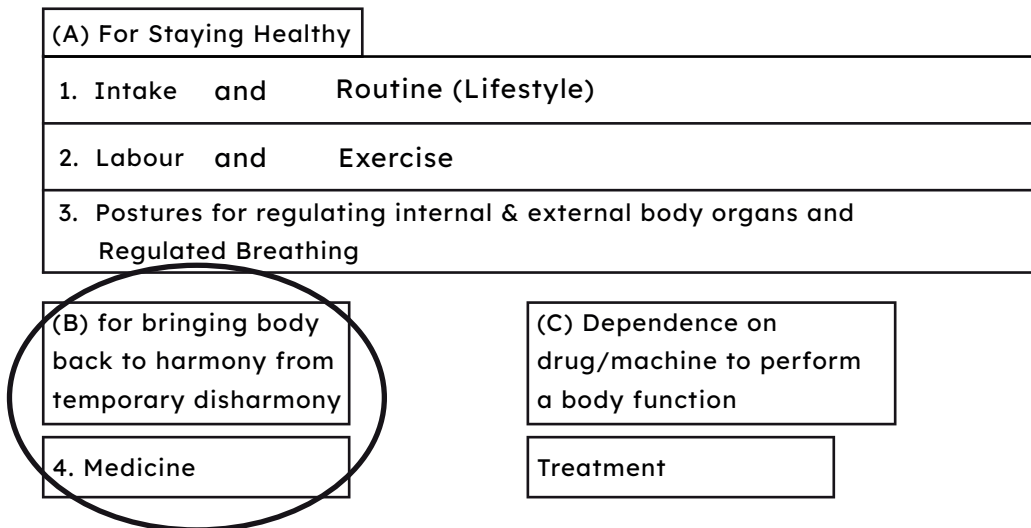


Figure - 25.1

What this means is that the sooner we detect the disharmony and start working on it the better (of course even better than this would be to prevent the disharmony from occurring in the first place!). Even when we are trying to correct the disharmony, we can continue all the practices we spoke of in '(A) -Staying healthy' - with the help of these, the disharmony will be corrected a lot faster and to continue to maintain the body in harmony, we will, anyway, have to ensure these practices regularly, else the body will slip back into disharmony again.

Being mindful of that, now let us look at '(B)' - what we can do once the body is in disharmony - how we can go about correcting it and helping the body come back to harmony. We will look at the following -

1. The early indicators of disharmony in the body - the warning signs of disharmony and how we can take the necessary steps to bring the body into harmony. The current chapter is devoted to this topic.
2. Home Remedies - In the next chapter we will look at the many substances available to us in our homes and how we can use them for correcting minor ailments before they escalate into something bigger
3. When to visit the doctor (use of medication)

So let us now start with the early indicators of disharmony - when the disharmony is mild. Whenever there is even mild disharmony in the body, certain signals are generated in the body - much before the manifestation of the disharmony (disease). If we pay attention to these signals, we can alter our intake and lifestyle, become more physically active and incorporate the practices mentioned earlier, so as to correct the disharmony in the body and prevent the onset of disease. Here are some of the signals that indicate disharmony in the body and how you can aid the body in coming back to harmony:

Fever:

A healthy body maintains its temperature within the narrow range of 37.0°C and 37.7°C.

A Body temperature of 38°C (100.4°F) or more is considered to be a fever⁹⁴. Fever is not a disease per se but rather a signal or an indicator of

disharmony/disease in the body (e.g., infection or inflammation in some part of the body) and even before the occurrence of fever, there are some premonitory symptoms which may indicate the coming on of fever. These early indicators of fever are⁹⁵ -

- Feeling dull and lazy and depleted of strength
- Lacrimation/tearing in the eyes
- Yawning
- Feeling of heaviness in the body
- Feeling mentally fatigued
- Having indigestion and lack of appetite
- Dull/lustreless complexion
- Shivering/feeling cold etc.

If you have any of these symptoms, make sure that you are eating only nourishing food (food that is nurturing for the body) and not junk food, drink plenty of liquids and take rest (which means don't over exert) but do take a short walk in the open outdoors if you can. The fresh air will help the body to be in harmony. Light exercise or yoga may be beneficial if you feel up to it. If you have not been doing practices of breath regulation (like 'Pranayama') regularly, you can restart now and do so gently for 10-15 minutes if you can (especially the practice of alternate nostril breathing or 'anulom-vilom') – it may help to ward off the possible infection that may be brewing within. All these suggestions are helpful not just for fever but largely, for all infections and illnesses.

What you can do in presence of a fever to help the body come back to harmony:

1. Eat light – You may have heard of the saying –“Feed a cold and starve a fever”. Fever is an indicator that the body is working hard to get rid of the infection. At this time, if you eat heavy foods that are hard to digest, the body will need to spend a lot of energy just trying to digest the food and may not have sufficient energy left to effectively get rid of the infection. So take plenty of seasonal fruit and light foods like rice and moong dal khichdi, vegetable soups etc. and go light on the grains.

2. Drink sufficient quantity of liquids – Due to the high temperature, the body’s water requirement goes up during a fever so drink plenty of water and take fresh squeezed fruit juice (e.g., mosambi or sweet lime juice) so that the body remains well hydrated. Infections tend to flare up in presence of dehydration so restoring the body’s hydration will also help the body in overcoming the infection more efficiently.
3. Maintain your daily routine – Wake up early (with the birds) and go to bed early. When your circadian (day-night) rhythm is in order, the body processes of waste removal, cleansing, detoxification, repair and regeneration are able to take place without any hindrance but when you stay up late at night or wake up late in the morning, these processes get disrupted and it makes it that much harder for the body to overcome the infection.
4. Get plenty of rest – The more you take rest and sleep, the less interference you create in the body’s attempts to get back to harmony. The body has the capacity to repair itself, provided we allow it to do so!
5. Think positive – Having the right feelings and thoughts will help the body get back in harmony quickly because each and every thought you have has an impact on the body – positive thoughts help keep the body in harmony while negative feelings and thoughts (like those of anger, hatred, jealousy, fear and anxiety) disrupt the body harmony. If this seems difficult within the four walls of your room and if the fever is mild or has gone down, try and take a walk-in nature- be in proximity to plants and trees and this will help you have peaceful thoughts and a calm mind.

Skin Ailments⁹⁶:

Some warning signs and symptoms may be:

- Numbness in a patch of skin
- Excessive perspiration (sweating) or absence of perspiration in an area of the skin
- Patchy discoloration (e.g., redness/paleness) of the skin or elevation (raised areas) in the skin

- Itching, burning or pain in the skin
- A sudden appearance and persistence of ulceration (a break/open area) in the skin along with pain.

It is quite possible that some of the above symptoms may be followed by a full blown skin rash.

What you can do in presence of skin rashes to help the body get back to harmony:

1. Drink sufficient water – No skin disease is skin deep – there will usually be an underlying reason in the body for the problem visible on the skin and this is most likely linked to accumulation of toxins in the body over time. Hydration is the key to getting rid of toxins from the body.
2. Eat healthy – No matter how much make-up you put on your face to try and hide the blemishes it will not work as well as if the complexion itself were free from all blemishes. For a naturally glowing complexion at all times, be sure to eat right – plenty of fruit and fresh squeezed fruit juice (without adding sugar), whole grains and nuts. For a healthy and glowing skin you need to avoid oily, greasy, spicy foods and stay away from junk fast foods and packaged and processed foods.
3. Keep to a healthy routine – As mentioned, skin rashes are not merely skin deep. Since skin problems are a pointer to problems within the body (very often linked to digestion), waking up early and going to the toilet at the right time is a must for getting rid of toxins and unwanted body waste.
4. Daily exercise – One of the best ways of getting rid of toxins from the body is to do some regular exercise which will help you perspire and sweat out the toxins. You could choose to do active exercise (e.g., running/jogging/skipping rope/jumping jacks etc.) coupled with yoga breathing exercises (pranayama) which help detoxify the body.
5. Wear breathable clothes – Pure 100% cotton clothes are best for the skin. This is because cotton, being porous, is a fabric that allows free air exchange between the skin and the outside air so body sweat (which is

trying to get the toxins out of the body) evaporates easily and leaves the skin dry and feeling fresh. On the contrary, when you wear synthetic clothes next to the skin, the fabric is not 'breathable' and does not allow the sweat formed on the skin to evaporate, thus leading to skin rashes.

6. Avoid suppressing the urges that keep the body in harmony- it is important to pay attention to these urges so that the body can get rid of unwanted and waste matter like urine, stool etc. and stay in harmony.

Imbalance in Body water:

An imbalance of water in the body may result in one of the following:

1. Dehydration (less water in the body)
2. Over hydration (too much water in the body) and
3. Oedema (swelling in the body)

Let us look at these one by one.

Dehydration:

As mentioned above, dehydration is a state when the fluid in the body is less than it should be. This may result from one of two reasons -

Inadequate (less) intake of fluid or

Excessive loss of fluid from the body

The result of either of these two reasons is that there is insufficient water in the body for all the various body processes to occur and for the body to function in a smooth and efficient manner.

Early symptoms of mild dehydration:

1. Dryness of the mouth and lips
2. Darker coloured urine than normal
3. Feeling thirsty.

If there is insufficient water in the body, the above three symptoms are perhaps going to be the first symptoms you may notice (if you are paying

attention). At this time if you drink some extra water, that may be all that it takes to get the body back on track (in harmony).

If you are not paying attention, don't take heed and don't respond to these early symptoms (i.e., don't increase your water intake), the dehydration may worsen and you may go on to develop further symptoms:

1. Headache
2. Feeling increasingly tired and weak
3. Feeling dull and responding more slowly than usual.

Though the dehydration is now worse than before, you can still correct it rapidly by taking extra fluids like coconut water, sweet lime juice, barley water, or oral rehydration solution (ORS) and taking rest. The ORS can be home-made (water + sugar and a pinch of salt) or ready packaged ORS. Instead of a regular meal, you can have a liquid meal like concentrated rice water (kanji), 'dal' water etc. and this will provide more energy too.

However, if you still don't pay heed and don't correct the disharmony, the dehydration may become severe leading to symptoms that can no longer be taken care of at home, such as

1. Extreme lethargy with a feeling of being totally devoid of energy,
2. A state of confusion or even unconsciousness.

Over Hydration:

Just as it is not beneficial to have less than adequate water, drinking excess amounts of water, more than required by the body, is also not beneficial and may disrupt the normal processes going on in the body e.g., those of digestion. Usually though, one tends to stop drinking water once the thirst has been quenched and even if one drinks excessive amounts of water orally (by mouth), the limited amount of water that can be taken in does not do much harm to the body.

Such over hydration is easily prevented by drinking water in moderation and only when thirsty – at the very least, not forcing yourself to drink water even though the body doesn't seem to have a need for it.

Over hydration becomes more of a concern when fluids are administered into the body by invasive routes such as the administration of intra-venous fluid (fluid injected directly into the blood stream via the veins). In such cases there is a greater risk of excessive input of water as also of more severe electrolyte imbalances in the body (e.g., 'water intoxication' in association with a sodium level way below normal). With this, severe symptoms like fatigue, lethargy, disorientation, confusion, headache, etc. may result.^{97,98}.

Oedema (Swelling):

Oedema refers to a swelling (usually due to a collection of fluid) in the dependent parts of the body (because of gravity). Since we are in an upright position most of the time, the dependent parts are the feet and hence oedema is commonly seen in the feet. This is often indicative of hampered blood circulation in the area and is commonly seen—

When one is sitting or standing for prolonged periods of time

During pregnancy

With increasing age

In those who are overweight and

Those who have diets with a lot of salt or processed foods.

Long standing oedema of the feet puts a load on the heart and kidneys so it's a good idea to try and correct the problem in the early stages itself.

What you can do to reduce the oedema and help bring the body back in harmony:

1. Avoid or at least cut down on salty and processed foods – This means you need to avoid all packaged, oily, fried and spicy foods as also those that are heavily processed e.g., very fine grains (like fine white or wheat flour, fine besan or chick pea flour, white rice etc.), bakery goods like breads, biscuits, patties, pastries etc. and all packaged and junk foods (like chips, instant oats, instant noodles etc.) Instead, let whole grains, fruits and vegetables form a large part of your daily diet.

2. Walk! – Since fluid collects in the dependent parts of the body when they are in the same position for prolonged periods of time, the best way to get rid of the fluid swelling is to get active. Walk for at least 30-45 minutes at least 3-4 times a week. When you walk, the leg muscles contract and relax rhythmically again and again, squeezing the blood vessels in the legs, thus helping to improve the circulation.
3. Drink sufficient water – Since oedema is often linked to eating a lot of salty and processed food, drinking sufficient water helps get rid of these unwanted substances in the body (at the same time, making sure not to overdo this i.e., not to keep drinking water even when not thirsty).
4. Eat food that is less processed (e.g., whole grains, fruits and vegetables) – Fruits and vegetables are not only rich in fibre but also have a naturally high content of water so eating these helps cleanse the system and get rid of unwanted toxins in the body.
5. Massage the body with warm oil to help get the circulation going – While walking is one of the best methods to improve the circulation in the legs, it will also help for you to massage the legs with warm oil, squeezing on the calves, thus helping in the circulation of blood through the veins, easing the pain in the legs and helping mobilise the collection of fluid in the feet

Piles/Haemorrhoids:

Piles/haemorrhoids is a very common condition that is characterized by swollen and inflamed veins in the rectum and anus and it often causes itching and discomfort in the anal area along with bleeding from the swollen veins. A person with piles having swollen veins just beneath the skin of the anus may have a lot of discomfort when sitting down or when attempting to pass motion and when the motion is passed, it is often scanty and laced with blood from the swollen veins.

When piles or swollen veins are present in the rectum ('internal' piles), they do not cause much discomfort but may still lead to the passing of blood in the stools.

Warning or premonitory signs of haemorrhoids are:

- Indigestion and frequent sour eructations/belching
- Discomfort and bloating of the abdomen
- Straining when attempting to pass stools
- Hardened stools and the passage of minute quantities of stools.

Haemorrhoids are usually seen in –

- Pregnancy
- Those who tend to have constipation and strain when passing bowel movements
- Those who are inactive and obese.

What you can do to prevent and relieve piles and help the body get back to its normal state:

1. Eat a high fibre diet – This will add bulk to the stool so that waste matter can be passed out with ease
2. Drink sufficient water – This will help get rid of constipation and ease the passage of stool out of the body
3. Exercise regularly – Regular exercise helps to move things around in the intestines, prevent constipation and thus aid the passage of stool.
4. Consume A2 ghee regularly – Ghee acts as a lubricant and softens the stool making it easy to pass down the intestines and out of the body.
5. Make effort to get in the habit of passing bowel movements regularly in the morning.
6. Avoid suppressing the urge to have a bowel movement – Pay attention when you have the urge to pass stool and do not suppress the urge, nor try to forcefully pass the stool.
7. For temporary relief you can use a stool softener or apply a lubricant locally but keep in mind that these are for temporary relief only and have no role in long term cure.

Cough, Bronchitis and Asthma:

Whenever there is irritation in the air passages due to dust, pollen, viruses, bacteria, smoke etc. (or any other foreign object that does not belong in the air passages), some sensations are generated in the body - these signal the disharmony. One such signal is the urge to cough. When we cough forcefully and repeatedly, the foreign irritant is removed from the air passages. Irritation in the air passages may also result from an accumulation of mucous/phlegm due to excessive formation of toxins in the body that the body is unable to remove.

A long-standing collection of toxins or irritants leads to inflammation of the air passages and the formation of mucous/phlegm which results in the symptom of chronic cough - if this cough persists for more than two months, it is termed bronchitis. In bronchitis, the inflammation is particularly in the two main bronchial tubes arising from the trachea (the main air passage) along with their branches. In a person with bronchitis the long-standing irritation in the air passages is most often the result of smoking over a long duration - chronic smokers have inflammation and swelling of the air passages along with the formation of mucus and phlegm and a characteristic 'wet' and chronic cough.

If a cough is present persistently but mostly in the late evenings, nights and early mornings with the day time being relatively free of cough, this could be what is termed asthma or RAD (reactive airway disease - a milder form of asthma). This type of cough usually comes and goes every now and then (the cough may appear to go away for a few days but then recurs with waxing and waning of symptoms (e.g., the cough may become worse in some seasons like the rainy or spring season and at the time of change of seasons but is almost non-existent in the summer).

An asthmatic cough is characterised by three recurrent symptoms -

Cough (initially only at night and, if not corrected, in the daytime also)

Inflammation and formation of secretions/mucous in the airways → expectoration (the arising or spitting out) of sputum or phlegm and

Shortness of breath with a characteristic 'wheezing' sound during expiration (when breathing out)

Such a cough usually does not respond to ordinary cough medicines and if severe or ignored, ends up requiring stronger forms of medication.

What you can do for coughs and prevent them from leading to bronchitis/asthma:

1. Eat right- Eating balanced meals with healthy food choices and avoiding oily, fried and processed foods of all types helps prevent the accumulation of toxins that build up and surface as mucous and phlegm. Not only does eating balanced meals nourish the body but it also builds the immunity of the body making it resistant to (or being only mildly affected by) viruses, bacteria etc.
2. You can add spices like Clove, cumin, Kali mirch (black pepper), Pippali (long pepper), Dalchini (cinnamon), Tejapatta (bay leaf) etc. to the food to prevent aggravation or deterioration of the cough.
3. Avoid smoking and exposure to pollutants that irritate the airways – As mentioned above, such irritants are highly damaging for the airways and are to be avoided.
4. Maintain your normal daily routine in sync with nature – As mentioned, asthmatic cough may be due to external irritants or it may be the result of toxins formed and retained in the body (when they are not expelled out from the body).

When you wake up before sunrise and go to the toilet early in the morning, the body's activity of bowel cleansing, as well as other early morning cleansing activities (e.g., expelling out of mucous/sputum) in a much more efficient manner and this prevents accumulation of toxins.

5. Exercise – Daily vigorous exercise causes you to sweat and this is one way the body expels toxins. Exercise also helps in the smooth evacuation of the bowels – another effective way of removing the waste matter and toxins from the body, thus preventing asthma in the long run.
6. Yoga breathing exercises – Pranayama exercises also help in the process of waste removal (waste and toxins in the body are expelled out through the breath). The process also builds body immunity – just a few (10- 15)

minutes of yoga breathing daily will make your body resistant to colds, coughs, fevers etc. and prevent such infections from disrupting the body harmony. You can try it out and experience these benefits yourself.

Acidity and Vomiting:

Acidity is a condition of excess acid formation and build-up in the stomach. You may notice it as a sour taste in the mouth, an aversion for food (nausea), sour eructations (belching) or ‘heartburn’ (a burning sensation in the chest).

The symptoms of acidity could be an indicator of

- Overeating (perhaps you ate too much in the last meal)
- Having consumed food that is highly acidic (oily, spicy or fried food, pickles etc.)
- Consumption of heavy meals that the body is unable to digest
- Tension and anxiety (when you are tense, there is a higher secretion of acid in the stomach)
- Inactivity (when you do no activity, the body requires less food but if you continue eating regular amounts of food the body cannot digest it)

Vomiting (‘throwing up’ or ‘emesis’ as it is referred to) is the forceful bringing up of the stomach contents into the oesophagus or food pipe and expelling (throwing) them out through the mouth.

The premonitory symptoms of vomiting (i.e., the sensations you feel before you vomit) are⁹⁹:

- Nausea and aversion for food
- An uneasy sensation in the chest and
- Excessive salivation

These symptoms are similar to those of acidity because vomiting is often caused as a result of acidity.

Why do we vomit? Whenever there is something in the stomach that is not suitable for the body, something that acts as an irritant (e.g., poison, toxins,

some types of viruses, bacteria, parasites etc. or even too much acid build up in the body), the body rejects it in the form of a sensation that we ‘read’ (interpret) as an urge to vomit and then we throw up. The whole sequence of events happens so fast that it almost seems like a reflex action. Vomiting is actually a good thing because it prevents the toxin or irritant from remaining in the body and causing it more harm!

What you can do for nausea, acidity and vomiting and bring the body back to harmony:

1. Eat light – Start your day with fresh cleansing foods like fruit, carefully choosing those that will not worsen acidity. Bananas first thing in the morning (after water) tend to coat the stomach lining, protecting it from the damaging effects of acid build up. Similarly papaya is a great fruit to have in the morning. It is soothing and will help get rid of acidity. Avoid citrus fruit till the acidity subsides.

When you have acidity, you may want to substitute your regular lunch with a light salad instead, perhaps along with bland vegetables cooked without oil – you can add a spoon of ghee to these for lubrication. It will soothe the acidity. Dinner can also be light and in the form of vegetable soup. Since the acid build up causes nausea, light meals for a day (or two) should not be difficult.

Often it is touted that the solution to acidity is frequent small bland meals and as many as five meals are proposed with white bread being considered as an example of bland food. Not true. Since the problem often arises as a result of excess food, it is best to avoid eating more than required. For an average, moderately active person, the body does not require more than two or three meals per day. If you feel hungry between meals and feel the need for a snack, reach for a fruit (avoid processed foods like white bread, bakery foods, foods that are fried, oily, spicy etc.).

2. Make a meal of lotus seeds (‘makhane’) – This is a super food when it comes to acidity. The lotus seeds soak up the acid in no time and will make you feel better. Dry roast a bowl full of lotus seeds and lace them with some melted ghee and a pinch of salt. Not only will this take care of

your acidity but will be a tasty treat as well (consume these in place of a meal and not as an add on to the meal)!

3. Drink ample water – With excess acid build up in the body, even before you vomit, you may feel very restless and uneasy and may have a headache. Often, it will help to quickly drink up one or two glasses of warm and mildly salty water and then self -induce vomiting by putting your fingers in the back of the mouth and gagging on them. This will induce vomiting and help get rid of all the excess acid in the stomach. Once you do this, you may be relieved of the uneasiness and the headache may also clear up.
4. Healthy daily routine – Make sure that you are waking up early and going to bed early and eating your meals at the right time as mentioned in the chapter on healthy routine (this will keep your digestive system in good working condition).
5. Daily physical exercise – Daily physical activity helps strengthen the digestive system helping you to digest your food better.

Headache and Migraine:

A headache is another common problem that most people have experienced at some point in their life. Why do headaches happen? There may be several reasons for a headache – most commonly the reason is something simple e.g., not drinking enough water, visual strain on the eyes, a headache associated with colds (what is referred to as a ‘sinus’ headache), headaches associated with a digestive disorder with bloating, acidity etc. or headaches associated with tension and stress leading to a tightening of the neck and upper back muscles - referred to as a ‘tension headache’.

A migraine is a severe headache causing a throbbing or pulsating type of pain usually on one side of the head, often associated with nausea and sensitivity to light and sound¹⁰⁰. For many it culminates in vomiting and abates only once the person goes to sleep.

Some prodromal/warning signs and symptoms that may signal a headache or Migraine are¹⁰¹:

- Difficulty focusing, change in mood (ranging from irritability to depression)
- Dullness, tiredness, fatigue, sensitivity to light and sound
- Nausea, constipation or diarrhoea
- Insomnia and muscle stiffness, especially in the muscles of the neck, shoulders and upper back
- Excessive yawning, drowsiness, craving for certain types of foods etc.

The symptoms vary for different people so all warning signs may not be present in an individual.

What you can do to prevent headaches and keep the body in harmony:

1. Diet – Fresh fruit and vegetables must form part of the daily diet. Two foods specifically helpful for headaches linked to digestion are – A2 ghee (ghee is rich in omega-3 fatty acids which have been shown to be beneficial for migraines), lotus seeds (‘makhane’) which are extremely efficient at soaking up acid from the stomach and hence relieving headaches and migraines due to acidity.

Avoid outside food which may have additives like MSG (monosodium glutamate) that have been known to be associated with migraines. Also substitute all artificial and processed foods with natural derivatives – e.g., use honey or jaggery in place of sugar, natural rock salt (‘sendha namak’) and black salt in place of white table salt, cold pressed oils in place of refined oils and substitute natural whole grains and pulses in favour of processed or ground ones.

2. Ample water intake – ensure that you are taking ample water during the day
3. Exercise – daily physical exercise is extremely useful to stay agile and active and also keep your digestion in efficient working condition.
4. Daily routine – As with everything else, the routine plays a very important role in the maintenance of body harmony and should be kept in consideration at all times.

5. Yoga breathing – pranayama, especially alternate nostril breathing ('anulom-vilom') helps relieve headaches. Meditation is another useful tool.

Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2):

Diabetes mellitus (DM) is a condition in which there is a mismatch between the blood glucose level and the secretion of insulin i.e., the secretion of the hormone insulin by the pancreas (in response to an increased blood glucose level) is insufficient. The disease is nothing new – it has been described in ancient Indian medical texts as Madhumeha¹⁰². Type 2 diabetes was earlier referred to as adult-onset diabetes as it was usually seen only later in life - in the 40's or 50's or beyond that. Today, however, the more appropriate term for it is type 2 diabetes as it is now being seen in young adults in their 20's and 30's and even in some teens; India has been referred to as the 'diabetes capital of the world' due to the alarming increase in numbers of its people being afflicted with the disease!

So what is this diabetes and can we do something to prevent and even get rid of it? For that we need to understand a little more about it. Type 2 diabetes has been described as a chronic metabolic disorder characterised by persistent hyperglycemia (a persistently high blood glucose level) along with the symptoms of –

Increased thirst

Increased hunger

Frequent urination

Fatigue or tiredness and

Loss in weight (though sometimes one may not be able to appreciate any symptoms at all).

If the blood sugar levels remain uncorrected, type 2 diabetes may impact the eyes and their vision and vital organs like the kidneys etc.

Why does one have this persistent hyperglycaemia? It is thought to be due to impaired or inadequate insulin secretion, a resistance of the high blood glucose to the insulin or both¹⁰³. In the normal course of events, the food we

eat leads to a rise in the blood glucose level. This increased blood glucose needs to reach the cells where it can be utilised for energy. This work of transporting the glucose from the blood stream to the various cells of the body is done by the hormone insulin that is secreted by the pancreas. As the glucose is transported from the blood, the blood glucose level comes down and when the glucose reaches the cells, it is used by the cells for energy. All of this normally occurs as a slow and gradual process.

When we eat highly processed carbohydrate rich foods (e.g., white bread), they lead to a very rapid increase in blood glucose level – it is like a sudden surge or burst of glucose into the blood stream. For this large amount of glucose to leave the blood stream and reach the cells where it can be used for energy, a very large amount of insulin needs to be secreted by the pancreas – initially, the body copes with this high demand for insulin but the frequent requirement of such a large amount of insulin to be secreted so rapidly can become challenging for the body. So if we eat this type of processed carbohydrate rich food occasionally, the body is able to cope with it by secreting ample insulin quickly but if we make it a habit of eating such foods, the body is unable to cope with the huge increase in insulin demand and when the insulin secretion is not up to the demand, the high level of glucose in the blood persists (hyperglycaemia).

Thus, two things happen when we eat highly processed carbohydrate rich foods:

1. Initially, when the body rapidly secretes the large amount of insulin in response to the rapid burst of hyperglycaemia, it results in a rapid fall in the blood glucose level - we start to feel hungry again and eat another meal. If the meal is again a processed carbohydrate rich meal, the same process recurs. Thus, with these rapid rises and falls of blood glucose we end up eating many more meals than we need to → obesity.
2. As we make this a regular habit, the body is no longer able to cope with the increased glucose levels, leading to persistent hyperglycaemia.

What we can do to prevent Diabetes or reverse the process:

1. Eat closer to the whole grain- Since the problem arises when you eat highly processed foods, it is best to avoid all such foods (e.g., foods made from white flour, quick ready-to-eat packaged foods, all junk fast foods etc.); if the packaging says that the food takes only 2 minutes to cook, it is likely to be highly processed. These are the foods that cause a rapid surge in blood glucose (referred to as foods with a high glycaemic index).

Replace these processed foods with whole grains or as close as you can get to the whole grain (e.g., brown rice, millets, quinoa etc.) and eat these in the form of the whole grain (not as fine flour which is again a processed form). Whole grains, leading to a slow rise of glucose in the blood, are referred to as foods with a low glycaemic index. This gradual rise in blood sugar leads to a gradual increase in insulin secretion, followed by a gradual fall in blood glucose. Because of this you feel full for a longer time after the meal and don't feel the need to eat again and again at short intervals.

2. Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables – Fruit and vegetables have plenty of fibre and this makes them low glycaemic, making the blood glucose rise and fall slowly. These are also 'carbs' (have carbohydrates) but are carbohydrates in a healthy form. It is a myth that fruit must be avoided in diabetes. In fact, if you have plenty of fruit in the whole/natural form every day, you will not develop diabetes!

Canned and processed fruit e.g., fruit juice etc. can be avoided.

3. Replace artificial or processed sweeteners with natural, unprocessed or less processed ones – e.g., honey, dates or jaggery as sweeteners in place of white crystallised sugar. Honey is a low glycaemic index food and is safe to use.
4. Do plenty of regular physical exercise – walking is a great daily habit. Walking for 30-45 minutes daily will go a long way in getting rid of diabetes.

5. Reduce stress – One reason for increased blood glucose levels is stress. In presence of stress, there is a release of hormones like cortisol and one effect of this hormone is that it leads to hyperglycaemia. So, decreasing stress helps – exercise is a great way to do this, others can be meditation, taking to practices like gardening etc.

Hypertension and heart disease:

Hypertension (an increase in blood pressure) (BP) is recognised as a major cause of premature death worldwide. As per the WHO fact sheet from 2021¹⁰⁴, more than 1.28 billion adults worldwide in the age group of 30-79 years had hypertension (two-thirds living in low- and middle-income countries) and less than 1 in 5 people had it in control. In India, hypertension is directly responsible for 57% of all stroke deaths and 24% of all coronary heart disease (CHD) deaths¹⁰⁵.

The overall prevalence of hypertension in India is estimated to be 29.8% with 27.6% in the rural population and 33.8% in the urban despite the fact that Indian states with greater urbanisation have better health care facilities. And this is not just in the older population; as with diabetes, hypertension also is now being diagnosed increasingly in younger and younger adults in their prime – in their 20's and 30's.

What exactly does hypertension or an increase in blood pressure mean?

Blood pressure is a measure of the force with which your blood pushes against your arterial (blood vessel) walls. A person's blood pressure can be measured manually by an instrument with a mercury column (with one hand monitoring the pulse) or it can also be measured with an automated instrument. Of the two, manual readings are generally more accurate.

Blood pressure is measured and reported as two components – the systolic blood pressure (signifying the pressure of the blood flow during the phase of contraction of the heart muscle i.e., when it pumps the blood out of the heart) and the diastolic blood pressure (pressure of blood flow during the phase of relaxation of the heart- when the heart fills up with blood coming from the various parts of the body back to the heart). The unit of measure is in millimetres (mm) of mercury (Hg). A measure of 120 systolic and 80

diastolic is considered to be normal and would be reported as a blood pressure of 120/80 mm Hg.

A blood pressure greater than 140/90 mmHg is generally referred to as hypertension. When the blood pressure rises higher than 140/90 mm Hg and remains high persistently, it can damage the arteries making them less elastic. This leads to a decrease in the flow of blood to the heart. A decrease in blood flow to the heart translates to a decrease in oxygen supply to the heart and resultant heart disease with symptoms of chest pain (angina), shortness of breath etc.

Since all blood vessels get damaged by hypertension, it is not just the heart that gets damaged but also various other vital body organs e.g., the brain (leading to stroke), the kidneys etc.¹⁰⁶. Hypertension is labelled as a ‘silent killer’ because most people with hypertension (85%) are asymptomatic¹⁰⁷.

Why do some people develop high blood pressure? Though generally believed that both genetic and environmental factors are at play, in 95% of cases of hypertension, the exact underlying cause is still a mystery to modern medicine^{108, 109}.

You are considered to be more at risk for high blood pressure if you –

- Have a family history of high blood pressure
- Tend to eat a diet high in sodium/salt
- Are obese or grossly over-weight or have an inactive lifestyle
- Are a heavy drinker/smoker.

Some indicators that you may be hypertensive or have hypertensive heart disease are:

- Frequent headaches
- Shortness of breath on mild exertion
- Nosebleeds that are hard to stop
- Dizziness
- Chest pain or a feeling of pressure or heaviness on the chest
- Changes in vision e.g., blurring of vision

- Flushing of the skin
- Blood in the urine
- Feeling fatigued or tired much of the time
- Persistent leg or ankle swelling

It is also possible that one may be hypertensive and yet have no symptoms at all. Should you have any concern, you can have your blood pressure checked.

What you can do to prevent hypertension and heart disease:

Though the genetic predisposition to hypertension is (currently) thought to be unmodifiable, the risk for hypertension is certainly modifiable and preventable as environmental/lifestyle factors play a major role in this disease. Here are some things you can do to prevent hypertension and its related effects:

1. Diet – eat well balanced meals that include plenty of fibre rich foods like fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grains and whole pulses.

Avoid greasy, fatty foods and foods that are high on salt e.g., highly processed and packaged, ready to eat snacks, frozen/canned foods etc.
– excess salt is often added to these.

2. Exercise – Regular daily exercise keeps your heart healthy, lowers stress and keeps your blood pressure normal. The right diet and exercise will also keep your weight in check (remember that being overweight is also a risk factor for hypertension).

3. Avoid smoking and excessive drinking – Smoking puts you at a higher risk for high blood pressure and heart disease and also causes lung cancer so it makes good health sense to avoid smoking completely.

Drinking excess alcohol can lead to increased blood pressure so cut down or better yet, stop drinking to enjoy better health.

4. Lower stress – Take to outdoor activity in the vicinity of nature (e.g., gardening), outdoor games, swimming etc. and self-explore/meditate to help you relax and decrease stress.

5. Ensure the right feelings within yourself – Negative emotions like those of fear, anxiety, jealousy, anger, hatred etc. have been linked to stress and high blood pressure. The process of self-exploration and self-validation can help with this - become aware of your imagination – observe your feeling and ensure the right feeling within yourself (a feeling in line with your natural acceptance). This will lead to a more joyful state in you and with it a normalising of your blood pressure and the return of the body to its natural state of balance and harmony.

So this was an extensive discussion about the indicators of disharmony in the body and how, by paying attention to the early signals, you can take the necessary steps to prevent further disharmony and assist the body in coming back to harmony. You will notice that in most instances, the steps include the right intake and daily routine, outdoor work with nature, exercise, yoga and pranayama (at the level of the body) and, more importantly, having harmony in the Self (i.e., having the right understanding and right feeling) so that the Self doesn't disrupt the inherent harmony in the body and, with a feeling of self-regulation, takes responsibility to keep the body in harmony.

In the next chapter, we will take a look at the multitude of home remedies that are readily available to us and how we can utilise these to assist in the various body functions.

Test Your Understanding

1. Name five things you could do to aid the body in correcting disharmony i.e., things that would be beneficial in bringing the body back to harmony.
2. Make a list of whatever you aspire to improve in your health today – for example,

I would like to be able to sleep less; I wish I had better energy levels; if only my body was more flexible; I wish I could lose some weight etc.

In front of each item on your list, make another list of the changes you plan to make in order to accomplish this (e.g., specific changes in your diet, daily routine etc.).

3. List any five early indicators of disease and write down the specific measures you would take to correct the disharmony and bring the body back in harmony.

Chapter 26

Home Remedies

The premonitory symptoms of various diseases that were described in the last chapter are warning bells that all is not well in the body. Besides correcting our intake and lifestyle, working with nature and taking the help of exercises, body postures for regulating the body (e.g., yoga) and regulation of the breath (pranayama) for keeping the body in harmony we can also take the help of simple home remedies to correct minor disharmony in the body if and when it arises.

Many of these home remedies are largely simple herbs and spices that we use in our day to day cooking and that are readily available in our kitchens and home kitchen gardens. It is worthwhile to have a working knowledge of the use of all such herbs and though they don't of course substitute for a visit to the doctor, they can be highly beneficial in getting rid of the malady before it becomes a major disease (provided we know what to use them for and how to use them).

Such home remedies are the outcome of generations of experiential knowledge that has been passed down from one generation to the next in the Indian tradition. The knowledge has been passed down not by theoretical teaching but by experiencing the effects of the various herbs and spices and demonstrating them practically.

Common Ailments and Their Simple Home Remedies

A list of common ailments is given below along with several options of home remedies that you can choose from, to correct the ailment.

Generalised Ailments (Fever, Cold, Cough)

Fever

- 20 ml. of a decoction made with 5 gm. of coriander seed (Dhania) powder 3-4 times a day (you can add sugar if desired).

- 30ml. of a decoction made with a handful of tulsi leaves & 5 gm. of coriander seed (Dhania) to be taken thrice in a day.

Cold

- 10ml. of a decoction made from a one inch piece of ginger and taken every morning prevents recurrent colds.
- 20 ml. of a decoction prepared with 5 gm. of coarsely ground coriander seeds (dhania), sugar and turmeric powder (haladi) to be had thrice a day
- Herbal tea made with coriander seed powder taken every morning prevents colds, coughs and problems related to digestion.
- 20 ml. of a decoction made with 5 gm. of coriander seed, 1 gm of fenugreek seed (methi) and a pinch of turmeric powder can be taken 2-3 times a day.
- Milk boiled with 2 gm. of turmeric powder with a pinch of saunth (dry ginger powder) can be taken twice a day (sugar may be added to the warm milk if desired).
- Decoction of 1 gm. of turmeric powder taken as a herbal tea prevents allergies.

Cough

- A pinch of powdered small (green) cardamom (chhoti elaichi) with a teaspoon full of honey 3-4 times per day.
- Chewing small cardamom (not more than 3 per day) relieves throat irritation and is helpful in dry as well as productive cough.
- 2-5 gm. of dry ginger powder (sunthi or saunth) with jaggery thrice a day in divided doses.
- Crushed garlic bulb boiled in water – can be taken with sugar.
- Clove (laung) can be chewed or clove powder can be taken with honey 2-3 times in a day.

Symptoms/Ailments of the Digestive System

Indigestion

- 5 gm. crushed rhizome of Ginger (Adrak) as ginger juice (half to one spoon) or as small pieces mixed with black salt or jaggery can be chewed three to four times a day or before meals.
- 100 ml. juice of pomegranate fruit (anaar/dadima) can be taken with a pinch of black salt and black pepper.
- Fried and powdered cumin seeds (Jeera) with honey (preferable) or sugar - to be held in the mouth for some time before food.
- 2 gm. of cinnamon bark (dalchini) powder to be taken twice a day with water.
- 20 ml. decoction prepared from 5 gm. of coriander powder in coarse form with a pinch of ginger powder thrice a day.
- 3-6 gm. of fried cumin seed powder and rock-salt to be taken with warm water thrice daily.
- 1-2 gm. of powdered clove (Laung) with warm water.
- 5-10 ml. of lemon juice taken with a pinch of salt and pepper before food.
- 3-5 gm. of powdered fennel seeds (saunf) with fried cumin seed powder and rock-salt (sendha namak) with warm water thrice daily
- 5-10 ml. of tulsi juice twice or thrice daily

Abdominal Pain

- 5 ml. of Ginger juice in a glass of butter milk with lemon & salt
- 1 gm. powdered Carom seed (Ajvain) with luke warm water twice or thrice a day.
- Asafoetida (hing) powder can be mixed with ghee and applied on & around the umbilicus (navel).
- 1 gm. asafoetida powder, fried in ghee and taken with butter milk twice a day.

- If pain is due to diarrhoea, 2 gm. of jayphal powder should be taken with warm water 4-5 times a day. It reduces the intestinal motility thereby reducing pain.
- 3-5 gm. of fennel seed (saunf) powder with buttermilk 3-4 times a day.
- 3-5 gm. of powdered Indian gooseberry (amla) fruit twice a day.

Loss of appetite

- 1 gm. powdered carom seeds (Ajvain) to be taken with warm water ½ hour before meals.
- A total of 2 gm. of powdered cinnamon bark (Dalchini) and powdered carom seeds (mixed in equal parts) to be chewed before food in three divided doses.
- Mix a pinch of asafoetida and cumin seed powder with food.
- A spoonful of honey with a pinch of black pepper powder three to four times a day.
- 5ml. lemon juice to be taken with a pinch of salt and black pepper before meals.
- 3-5 gm. of roasted and powdered fennel seeds (saunf), a pinch of black pepper and salt to be taken with butter milk twice daily.
- 5-10 ml juice of holy basil (tulsi) twice or thrice daily

Flatulence (gas)

- 2 gm. of powdered carom seeds with equal quantity of powdered fennel seeds to be taken with warm water.
- 3-6 ml. of crushed garlic juice to be taken with honey twice a day.

Diarrhoea/Dysentery

- 10 ml. decoction of the rind/peel of pomegranate fruit (anaar/dadima) can be taken thrice a day.
- Pomegranate fruit can be eaten without restriction (in plenty).

- 2 gms. ash of the peel of small cardamom (chhoti elaichi) can be had with a little honey 4-5 times a day.
- A pinch of nutmeg (jayphal) powder or the nutmeg fruit rubbed on a clean surface and mixed with milk or water can be had 3-4 times a day.
- 1-2gm. powder of fried cumin seeds to be taken with 250 ml. butter milk four times daily.
- Chopped white onions can be fried in ghee and eaten with rice.

Hyperacidity

- 100 ml. juice of Pomegranate fruit twice a day.
- Pomegranate fruit eaten directly.
- 3-5 gm. of powdered Indian gooseberry twice a day or 10-20 ml. of amla fruit juice can be had twice a day or the Indian gooseberry fruit can also be eaten raw (as is).
- Cumin seeds roasted with 5-10 gm. of ghee can be taken with rice during meals.
- Tender coconut water twice daily
- Aloe Vera juice
- Ash gourd juice.

Vomiting

- 1-2 gm. of powdered cinnamon (dalchini) can be taken with honey thrice a day in divided doses
- A pinch of the seed of the small cardamom (chhoti elaichi) powder fried in ghee can be taken with honey thrice a day.
- 2 gm. ash of the small cardamom (chhoti elaichi) peel can be taken with a little honey 4-5 times a day.
- 5-10 ml of lemon juice mixed with water, sugar and a pinch of salt can be taken in small quantities frequently.

Constipation

- 3-5 gm. of powdered Indian gooseberry fruit can be taken twice a day with milk or 10-20 ml. of juice of the Indian gooseberry fruit can be taken twice a day.
- 5 ml of ghee can be added to a cup of warm milk and taken at bed time.
- 2-5 gm. of Haritaki powder (myrobalan/*Terminalia chebula*) can be taken with luke warm water.

Intestinal worms

- 3-5 gm. of coriander (dhania) powder can be taken with jaggery twice a day for 5 days.
- 10 ml of bitter gourd (karela) juice can be taken with jaggery in the morning for 3 days.
- 20 ml decoction made from a handful of neem leaves can be taken on empty stomach for three days.
- 5-10 ml of the juice of tender Moringa leaves or the chopped leaves themselves can be mixed with wheat flour, the dough kneaded and made into Parathas. When eaten, these help get rid of worm infestations.

Hiccoughs

- 1-2 pods of small cardamom (chhoti elaichi) can be chewed throughout the day (not more than 4 should be chewed in a day).
- 1-2 gm. of powdered black pepper seeds can be taken (with honey/sugar if needed) twice daily.
- 1-2 gm. of clove (laung) powder can be taken with honey in three divided doses.
- Two drops of white onion juice, when put into the nose, relieves hiccoughs

Sunstroke/dehydration

- 20 ml. decoction of coarsely powdered coriander seeds (dhania) with sugar and a pinch of salt can be taken frequently.

- Tender coconut water can be taken frequently.
- Using plenty of onions in the cooking can prevent sun stroke

Symptoms linked to the teeth and oral cavity

Bleeding gums

- Gently massage the gums with finely powdered Indian gooseberry (amla) at least twice daily after brushing.
- Apply a pinch of black pepper powder mixed with honey to your gums after gargling with warm salt water twice a day.
- Apply a mixture of ginger, black pepper, rock salt, honey & ghee to the gums twice a day

Tooth ache

- Place fried asafoetida (hing) in the carious tooth
- Crushed clove (laung) can be placed on the carious tooth.

Bad breath

- 1-2 small cardamoms (chhoti elaichi) seeds can be chewed (not more than 4 pods/day).
- Chew a small quantity of fennel seeds (saunf) after meals or snacks.

Symptoms/ailments of the Nose, Throat and Sinuses

Nasal block

- 1-2 gm Carom seed (ajvain) powder can be put in steaming hot water and the vapour inhaled 2-3 time a day.

Sinusitis

- Carom seed (Ajvain) powder can be applied as a warm paste over the forehead and a little below the eyes in the morning.

Hoarseness of voice

- 1-3 gm. of powdered dry rhizome of ginger (Sunthi or Saunth) can be taken with honey in three divided doses.

Aches and pains in the body

Generalized aches and pains

- 10-20 ml. of a decoction made with 2 gm. of powdered dry rhizome of ginger (sunthi or saunth) taken twice a day.

Body ache

- 2gm. of fenugreek (methi) powder mixed with 2 gm. of cumin seed (jeera) powder can be taken with warm milk (and sugar if needed) twice daily.

Headache

- Powdered dry rhizome of ginger (sunthi or saunth) can be applied as a warm paste over the forehead up to three to four times a day
- Cinnamon bark (dalchini) can be rubbed on a rough surface and applied with water (as a paste) on the forehead.

Ear pain

Note: Do not apply anything in the ear in presence of an ear discharge.

- 2-4 drops of warmed fresh ginger juice can be instilled in the ear
- 2-4 drops of warmed fresh garlic juice can be instilled in the ear twice a day.
- Garlic, crushed and made into a paste can be boiled in coconut or mustard oil and put in the ear 2-3 time a day.
- Powdered clove (Laung) can be boiled in coconut oil and the warm liquid put in the ear twice daily.
- 2-3 warmed tulsi drops can be put in the ear two times daily.

Joint pain

- 2-5 gm of a paste of a bulb of garlic can be taken mixed with honey or with food twice a day.
- Garlic paste mixed with any warmed oil can be applied over the joint.

Menstrual pain

- 1-2 gm. of powdered carom seeds (ajvain) can be taken with warm milk thrice a day for 2-3 days.

Skin related ailments

Acne

- A paste made from pomegranate peel (anaar/Dadima) can be applied to the affected area of the skin twice daily.
- A paste made from the herb Haridra can be applied to the affected area twice a day.
- Haridra can also be mixed with water, milk or cream and then applied to the skin – it gives a glow to the facial skin and regular use even removes unwanted hair from the skin.
- 5-10 ml. of bitter gourd (karela) juice can be consumed once a day in the morning on empty stomach.
- 10 ml of the juice of neem leaves can be taken twice daily on an empty stomach.

Black pigmentation

- This is commonly seen on the face in women in the menopausal age. Nutmeg (jayphal) rubbed in milk and applied on the affected area of skin is helpful.

Skin allergies

- 1-2 gm. of powdered carom seeds (ajvain) can be taken with water twice daily

- 1-2 gm. of a powder of fried cumin seeds (jeera) can be taken with milk twice daily.
- A pinch of black pepper powder can be mixed in coconut oil and applied locally.
- 5-10 ml. of bitter gourd (karela) juice can be taken on an empty stomach every morning.
- 10 ml. juice of neem leaves can be taken with honey twice a day.
- 5-10 ml. of holy basil (tulsi) juice can be taken twice or thrice daily

Dandruff/Hair fall/Greying of hair

- Soak Indian gooseberry (amla) fruit overnight in water and apply on scalp two hours before bath the next day or make a paste of the fruit and apply on scalp two hours before bath.
- Eating 1-2 fresh Indian gooseberry (amla) fruits every morning prevents hair fall and early greying of hair.
- Massage the scalp 2 hours before bath with fenugreek (methi) powder mixed in water and made into a paste.
- Regular use of fenugreek (methi) powder cooked in coconut oil is helpful.
- Fenugreek (methi) paste acts as a good hair conditioner.

Wound/ulcer/burn

- Frequent application of ghee over the affected area soothes and cools the skin.
- Wash the area with a decoction of turmeric (haldi). Make a paste of the turmeric by mixing it with ghee/ coconut oil and apply over the affected area.
- Honey and ghee can be mixed and applied.
- Coconut Oil can be applied frequently.
- A warmed paste made of neem leaves can be applied over the affected area.

- Holy basil (tulsi) juice can be mixed with honey and turmeric (haldi) powder and applied to the affected area.

Other miscellaneous conditions

Obesity

- One teaspoon honey can be taken with a glass of normal temperature water in the morning.

Poor Memory

Daily use of A2 ghee in children enhances memory power.

Stress

- 25-50 gm. of Indian goose berry (amla) fruit ground and mixed in butter milk can be applied on the forehead.
- Crushed pieces of cinnamon (dalchini) can be kept in the handkerchief or near the pillow; its aroma has a soothing effect

Test Your Understanding

1. Make a list of 10 plants, herbs, spices etc. that are available in your home or college compound and those that are used in the kitchen regularly. Draw a picture of each herb/spice and write down a minimum of 3 ways in which it can help to correct disharmony in the body e.g.

Ginger – helps reduce gas pain and bloating, helps soothe cough etc.

Turmeric – Is an anti-infective- helps to heal wounds and prevents and heals infections in the skin, throat etc.

(Lemon, garlic etc. can also be included in your list)

2. Write down what home remedies you would use for the following indicators of disharmony and why- Fever, Cough, Cold, Stomach pain, Headache, Nausea/Vomiting and Diarrhoea (loose motions).

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3. Incorporate the preventive use of five natural plants/herbs in your daily routine e.g., the application of aloe vera paste on the skin (as a mosquito repellent or as a soothing agent for the skin) or the intake of aloe vera orally to prevent acidity; e.g., the use of a neem twig for keeping the mouth, teeth and gums healthy; the intake of 'giloy' boiled in water and taken as a 'kadha' or decoction with lemon as an immunity booster etc.

Chapter 27

Medicine and Treatment: When to Visit a Doctor

At times it may be that despite correcting our intake and lifestyle - incorporating exercise, regulatory postures and breathing in our routine and the use of home remedies, the problem continues to persist. If so, then it is time to visit the doctor. The following may indicate that it is time to consult a doctor:

General Indicators

- When the illness or disease is severe or its symptoms continue to increase despite initial efforts as mentioned above and use of appropriate home remedies.
- Symptoms that do not subside even after three days of consistent care and effort.
- A symptom or illness that keeps recurring.
- Symptoms subside but the overall appetite and activity are poor e.g., when fever, loose motions, vomiting etc. subside but dullness and lethargy persist.
- An adverse reaction to any medication.
- When the symptoms resemble the warning signals of chronic illnesses like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease etc.

Specific Conditions with complications

Common cold or flu:

We've all had the cold or flu every now and then and it is generally accepted that any viral illness can take up to a week to get better. However, the following are signs that it is time to seek help:

- Severe pain on swallowing (more than a dry or sore throat).
- Earache.
- A cough that lasts more than 2 or 3 weeks.
- Persistent or severe vomiting.
- A fever that doesn't go down or go away.
- Symptoms that last more than 10 days or are getting worse instead of better.

Diarrhoea:

Occasional diarrhoea (loose motions) is not uncommon. It is usually harmless and the body tends to come back to its state of harmony within a day or so. However there are a few signs that may indicate a problem requiring help:

- Diarrhoea lasting more than 3 days.
- Black, tarry stools.
- Blood in the stool.
- Severe, unbearable abdominal pain.
- Signs of dehydration (very dry mouth or skin, fatigue, decreased urination, confusion or irritability).

Headache:

A headache may be a frequent or at least familiar experience for many. Every once in a while, you may get a headache due to drinking less water, having a digestive problem, tension, cold etc.; such headaches usually go away within a day with rest, regulation of diet and perhaps with some home remedies.

Signs that a headache may indicate a more serious condition (like stroke or meningitis) are- a headache associated with high fever, a stiff neck, confusion, trouble speaking or walking, blurring of vision etc. Such symptoms should not be ignored and immediate consultation with a doctor must be sought.

If the headache has any of the following symptoms, it may not require an immediate consultation, but you can arrange to schedule an appointment to see the doctor soon:

- A headache that is unusual for you (more frequent or more severe than normal).
- A headache that does not improve or tends to become worse with home remedies or over-the-counter medicine.
- A headache that is not allowing you to work, sleep, or participate in regular activities.

Digestive issues

Digestive issues may involve a problem in the upper digestive tract (oesophagus or stomach) or the lower digestive tract (intestines). Consult your doctor if you experience any of the following:

- Difficult or painful swallowing.
- A feeling that your food is caught in your throat or chest and doesn't go down.
- Heartburn that doesn't seem to go away, doesn't get better or seems to get worse despite medication.
- Nausea that won't go away.
- Vomiting of blood or green coloured vomiting (bile).
- Severe or persistent abdominal pain.
- Constipation or diarrhoea that won't go away.
- Stools that are tarry (black) or bloody.

Skin problems:

If you have a skin lesion associated with any of the following, you may need to seek medical attention:

- Bleeding from the lesion/affected area
- Formation and oozing of pus

- Numbness
- Discoloured patches of skin
- A non-healing ulcer
- Excessive or lingering itching in an area
- Foul smell in the lesion
- Recurrence of the lesion
- Skin lesion associated with generalised constitutional symptoms in other parts of the body.

Dental Problems:

- Dental cavities
- Bleeding gums
- Severe/unbearable toothache
- A non-healing mouth ulcer or recurrence of a mouth ulcer
- Excessive dryness of the mouth
- Discolouration of the tongue

Eye Problems:

- Excessive lacrimation (tears from the eyes)
- Redness of eyes that persists
- Blurring of vision
- Any non-healing lesion in the eyes

Back pain

Most back pains go away in a few weeks just by correcting the diet and lifestyle and doing a little gentle exercise. Applying hot fomentation to

the area, using home remedies and taking rest can also help. Back pain associated with the following symptoms may, however, indicate the time to consult a doctor:

- Pain that spreads down one or both legs, especially if it extends to below the knees.
- Pain associated with weakness, numbness or tingling in one or both legs.
- Constant and unrelenting pain or pain associated with unexplained weight loss.
- Pain along with swelling or redness on the back.
- Pain associated with a fever.

Head injury

Getting a bump on the head is most often a minor incident with no lasting consequences. However, if you have any of the following symptoms after a head injury, it may indicate a concussion or fracture or a condition that demands early medical attention.

- Feeling dizzy or having problems balancing
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Confusion.
- Having trouble concentrating or recalling things (problems related to memory).
- Feeling sluggish or foggy (not being able to think clearly).
- Sensitivity to light or noise.
- Excessive drowsiness, sleeping a lot.
- Feeling irritable or having other mood changes.

Menstrual problems

While the menstrual period is a regular and very normal monthly occurrence

for a teenage girl or a woman, the following are signs that it is time to consult a doctor for guidance:

1. Disabling cramps or cramp with severe and excruciating pain
2. Any sudden irregularity in the period such as—
 - No period for 3 or more months
 - Occurrences of bleeding in between the periods
 - A period that lasts longer than usual or is heavier than normal (is associated with more than normal bleeding)

Being Under or Over-weight

The Body mass Index (BMI) is accepted as a means of measuring the body fat in adult men and women. $BMI = \text{Weight in kgs} / \text{Height in m}^2$. For adults, a normal body mass index is considered to be between 18.5-24.9. For children and teenagers, these values differ (although the BMI is calculated in the same manner) because the amount of fat present in the body is age and gender-specific; it changes with age and differs between girls and boys.

For an adult, a BMI below 16 is considered to be below normal (underweight). If your BMI was normal before and this is a recent drop or is a result of weight loss due to disease or if the low BMI is associated with other symptom like weakness, loss of appetite etc., it is advisable to consult a doctor.

A BMI greater than 25 is an indicator of being overweight and if your BMI is above 30 you are grossly overweight or obese. If this is a weight gain secondary to other diseases or if it is associated with complications like breathlessness, a rapid heart rate etc., you may need to seek help in addition to following the program in '(A) – Staying healthy'.

Anaemia:

If you feel weak, get tired easily and the skin is pale, a simple blood test can detect if the body is anaemic (condition in which the body lacks enough healthy red blood cells to carry adequate oxygen to the various organs and tissues) and if the haemoglobin level in the blood test is below 9 gm/dl, the

body is definitely anaemic. The most common reason for anaemia is a lack of iron in the diet (iron deficiency anaemia). If iron deficiency is all it is, it can easily be corrected by a diet rich in iron. However, if the change in diet does not help to correct the anaemia or if the anaemia is associated with symptoms of breathlessness, weakness etc. it is better to seek help and have it checked out.

Other symptoms

The following are some symptoms that may be hard to categorize but are still noteworthy as they could be signs of a problem that needs to be addressed by a doctor:

- Hoarseness of voice or a sore throat that doesn't go away.
- Dizziness or feeling faint.
- Shortness of breath.
- Heart palpitations.
- Discomfort in the chest
- Unexplained weight loss.
- Extreme fatigue and loss of weight
- Severe sweating, especially cold sweats.
- Persistent swelling in the ankles or legs.
- Rash along with a fever (100.4 degrees °C or higher).
- A new mole or one that has changed recently/other skin changes.
- Non-healing ulcer, ulcer growing in size rapidly or one with bleeds
- Persistent fever
- Painful/painless lump or mass in any part of the body such as breast, abdomen etc.
- Unusual bleeding (e.g., via urine, stool, nipples etc.)
- Unexplained changes in bowel/bladder habits
- Difficulty swallowing even small amounts of food

Mental health issues

- Feelings of depression/sadness that don't go away or extremes of high and low feelings.
- Feelings of excessive fear, worry, or anxiety.
- Sudden changes in behaviour or appetite
- Loss of sleep.
- Inability to cope with day to day issues.
- Delusions or hallucinations.
- Substance abuse.
- Thoughts of hurting oneself or others.

Today, all or most of these are commonly seen mental health issues i.e., issues related to the health of the Self. We spoke about this earlier - a Self that is unfulfilled from within is unhappy (unhealthy). Such a self lacks the right feeling and right thought. Ultimately this is the cause of all mental health issues - the unfulfilled Self, being unhappy, seeks happiness from outside either by indulging in pleasing sensations through the body or by seeking the right feelings from others. However, this provides only temporary pleasure or excitement (it is fleeting, lasts for a very short time) while the need of the Self for happiness is continuous; the result is that the temporary pleasure again leads only to unhappiness. So whether to seek happiness or to try and escape from this unhappiness, the Self further indulges in similar activities (e.g., the use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs etc.). All such activities cause harm to the body - so now the unhealthy Self makes the body also unhealthy.

If we try to fix the problem in the body without working on the root cause of this problem (the unhealthy Self), we may be able to correct the disharmony in the body and bring it to harmony for a while but this will be short lived and, pretty soon, the body will go back in disharmony. What needs to be fixed is the problem in the Self.

To fix the problem in the Self, where should the focus be? If we focus on what is wrong and needs to be changed (e.g., if the Self is counselled about

the harm the substances cause to the body and why and how they should be gotten rid of) will it work, and for how long? Again, we're not working on the root of the problem.

We're telling an unhappy Self to get rid of the outside sources of temporary happiness, but we're not telling the Self how to be happy all the time - we're not helping the Self to have lasting happiness - so of course it will not work for too long.

The solution of the problem is for the Self to be resolved - to start paying attention to itself. Then we will be able to see that everything needed for our fulfilment is there within us - we just need to be able to see it (in the form of right understanding and ensuring the right feeling within ourselves). This process can be started by self-exploration with the help of a trigger from outside e.g., in the form of a guide/counsellor/psychologist who can draw the attention of the Self to its own imagination and also to the natural acceptance within us all. So, while none of the conditions mentioned above should be neglected and while timely help should be sought for them with proper evaluation and counselling by a counsellor, doctor or other expert, it is important for the person who is counselling to have the right perspective and focus on the root - i.e., to help start the process of self-exploration in the person so that he/she can ultimately have happiness in continuity from within.

This brings us to the end of this chapter in which we saw how we can decide on when to seek help from a doctor for medication. The details of the medication to use are beyond the scope of this book which is largely about being and staying healthy.

'(C) - Treatment' is not being elaborated on as it is merely a last resort when the body is damaged beyond repair (i.e., when the body has gone into permanent disharmony).

Program For Health - Conclusions

In this section and in sections four and five, we have discussed an example of a program for implementation of health in the body. Such a program can include an intake that is nurturing for the body and a daily routine that is

in accordance with the cycles of nature. The routine can also incorporate labour, exercise, the use of yoga postures, breath regulation (pranayama) and home remedies, as needed, to keep the body healthy. For a program like this to work for you i.e., for it to translate to better health in your body, you need to take responsibility for your body and implement this program (or one similar to it) on a regular basis so that you assist the body in staying in harmony (good health).

The discussions in these sections have probably drawn your attention to the fact that since the human body is physio-chemical in nature and made up of the fundamental attributes in nature, its proximity to nature and the natural attributes helps it to stay healthy - as an example, we saw the benefits of activity outdoors rather than indoors, exposure to sunlight, benefits of contact of the bare feet with earth etc. Similarly, we saw how the body benefits from the consumption of food cooked and stored in earthen pots and containers (as opposed to those made of aluminum, steel etc.).

Program for Health - Priority

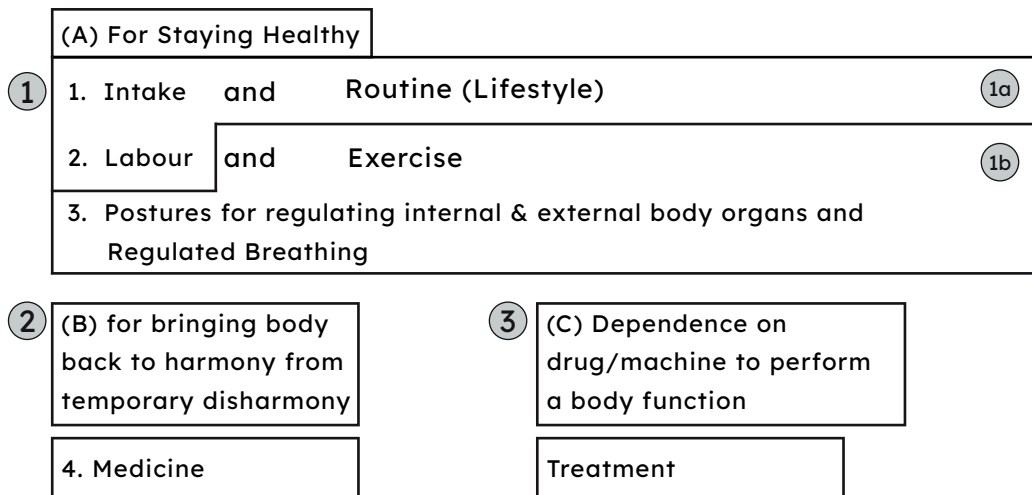


Figure - 27.1

So what would be your priority in such a program for health? The priority that is proposed is:

1. Staying healthy

(1a) Right intake, daily routine, labour

(1b) Daily exercise, regulating postures, regulated breathing

In case the body goes into disharmony, then too, all these practices can be done before resorting to

2. Medication

3. Treatment

While it is true that with the help of a program like the one mentioned above you can assist the body in being and staying in good health, what is also important to understand is that this can only be in accordance with the material laws of nature. What does that mean? Being physio-chemical, it is the nature of the body (like with all physio-chemical things) to undergo change - to age with time. So, while you can help prevent premature ageing of the body and you can help extend the life span of the body by taking responsibility for maintaining it in harmony, you cannot stop the ageing process; you cannot extend the body's life span indefinitely.

When we have the fundamental understanding that we are the Self and not the body, we accept the ageing process in the body with its greying of hair, wrinkles on the face etc. and are not disturbed by them. It is when we assume ourselves to be the body that we do not accept the changes taking place in the ageing body and attempt to cover up or mask the greying hair or hide the facial wrinkles. However, the ageing process will continue to take place in the body; covering or masking it is not going to make it stop.

Similarly, when we understand the true nature of who we are as a human being (the co-existence of two realities -the Self and the body and understand that the Self i.e., consciousness is ageless, that it is continuous in time and that the body is material and it is the body that dies -that is its nature, we then have an acceptance for the fact that death of the physical body is an inevitable occurrence after a certain age. Then we stop trying to increase the longevity of the body by any means beyond a certain age, even when the body is damaged beyond repair as we understand that the body that has taken birth has to die one day - this is an inevitable fact.

Test Your Understanding

1. Calculate the BMI for your body. Is it normal, below normal or above normal? If below or above normal range, write down the measures you will take to correct it and start applying the measures. Recalculate your BMI every month until it is within normal range.
2. Recall your last incident of disharmony in the body. Did you correct it with the program for staying healthy or did you resort to medication or even treatment without giving a fair trial to correcting your intake and routine and taking the help of labour, exercise, yoga and pranayama for maintaining the body in harmony?
3. Over a period of one month, observe the incidences of disharmony in your body and note them down e.g., how often you had fever, cough, cold, acidity, stomach pain, headache etc. – record the date, the problem, the number of days the problem lasted and what measures you took to correct it.

At the end of the month, evaluate how many of the incidences of disharmony you were able to correct with the program for staying healthy and for how many you took the help of medication or treatment.

Check – did you ensure the feeling of self-regulation for the entire month i.e., did you take responsibility for maintaining the body in harmony for the whole month or did you outsource this responsibility and have a dependence on a doctor/hospital/medication/treatment?

Make a program/plan for the concrete steps you will take in the future (from now onwards) to prevent such incidences of disharmony in the body and to prevent the need for medication/treatment.

Chapter 28

Protecting and Rightly Utilising the Body

We had spoken about the healthy Self –one that has the right understanding and right feeling within; as part of the right feeling, the healthy Self has a feeling of responsibility towards the body – to nurture, protect and rightly utilise the body. So far, we have discussed at length about how to nurture the body. Now we will see how to protect and rightly utilise it.

In order to protect the body from inclement weather, we wear clothes and keep the body sheltered – in our homes. Let us see the significance of our clothing and what clothes are most appropriate and suitable for the body.

Clothing

The choices we make regarding the clothes we put on the body may currently depend on various factors like

the current ‘in’ thing (what is fashionable), how the clothes look on us when we wear them (their appearance), how our physical build is (our body constitution), what the climate is like etc.

If we look at the purpose of clothes, we may be able to appreciate that clothes protect the body from the environment (hot or cold weather, rain etc.) by providing a barrier between the skin and the external environment thus insulating the body from the direct impact of environmental conditions. With the help of this barrier, clothes also help to maintain the hygiene of the body, protecting it from dust, insects, infections, toxic materials etc.

So how do we decide what clothes to wear? How should we make the choice? For this, let’s take a look at what is important to consider when we make these choices.

Some considerations regarding our choice of clothes:

1. Clothes should be comfortable

The clothes we wear should be light and loose and we should be comfortable wearing them. Tight fitting clothes like tight 'skinny' jeans, skin tight t-shirts etc. interfere with the blood circulation in the body.

Clothes that fit tightly around the chest or abdomen can prevent us from inhaling and exhaling completely, thus interfering with our breathing. They can even affect the gastrointestinal activities of the body. Studies have found that the transit time of a meal through the gut was significantly prolonged and excretion of the waste significantly reduced due to tight clothing.

Tight elastic bands in underwear and night clothes, besides causing the above problems, also cause irritation of the skin¹¹⁰.

Studies in men show an association between wearing tight fitting underwear or tight jeans/trousers and infertility. For the testes to function normally (i.e., to have normal sperm production), they need to be at a temperature slightly (1-2 degrees) lower than the body temperature. The testes reside in the scrotal sac and muscles in the scrotal walls tighten and relax from time to time, bringing the testes closer to the body for warmth or away from the body to keep them cool thus maintaining their temperature.

When very tight underwear, jeans or trousers are worn, the testes are pushed up against the body and the movement (tightening and relaxation) of the scrotal muscles is interfered with, causing the scrotal temperature (and therefore the temperature of the testes) to be higher than normal. This causes a decrease in both – sperm production and the production of the male hormone, testosterone and may lead to infertility.

2. Clothes should be 'breathable'

Clothes made of natural fibre like cotton are porous and allow the skin to 'breathe' i.e., they allow free air exchange. This helps the perspiration/sweat on the skin to evaporate and keep the skin dry. Cotton and silk are examples of natural fibres.

On the other hand, clothes made of synthetic material like rayon, polyester, nylon etc., being non-porous, do not allow free air exchange between the skin and the atmosphere. Therefore, sweat on the skin doesn't evaporate and the skin is then at risk for developing rashes as a reaction to the presence of one's own sweat.

Besides, these synthetic materials tend to have many chemicals that irritate the skin leading to skin rashes in the form of atopic dermatitis or eczema.

3. Clothes should be clean

It is advisable to wear fresh, clean clothes after a bath rather than to wear the same clothes as those of the previous day or days. This is especially true for the clothes nearest to the skin. Re-wearing clothes from previous day/days without washing them brings the skin in touch with the dust, dirt and contamination present on the clothes from before (including one's own sweat) causing skin rashes etc.

For the same reason, it is not advisable to wear the clothes worn by others or to wear new clothes without washing.

You may want to wear separate clean clothes for going out of the house and separate for being at home, working with the soil in the garden and for going to sleep at night. This will help prevent the spread of contamination from one place to another, maintaining the hygiene of the skin.

4. Clothes should allow adequate exposure to sunlight

Vitamin D deficiency is a very common condition these days and one of the main reasons for this is inadequate exposure to sunlight. Clothes can be such that they allow adequate exposure of the skin to sunlight, especially clothes worn in the early morning when the sunlight is extremely beneficial for the skin. When the face and arms are covered with clothes, this exposure to sunlight is prevented and the skin is thus deprived of the opportunity to make vitamin D.

5. Clothes can be in accordance with the season

In the summer when it is hot, thin cotton clothes that are light in colour (e.g., white, off-white/cream, light yellow etc.) not only allow good air exchange of the skin but also reflect the heat, keeping the body cool and dry.

On the other hand, during the pre-winter and winter months, thick cotton, woolen or silk clothes that are darker in colour are more appropriate as they help retain body heat and thus keep the body warm.

6. Clarity about the purpose of wearing clothes

Last but not the least, you need to answer the question –“What purpose is being served by the clothes I wear?”

The most obvious function of clothes is to protect the body from the extremes of environment – from excess heat, cold etc. and for us to be comfortable wearing these clothes.

Some Misconceptions:

1. Check – When you buy clothes, do you make your choice of clothes based on whatever is ‘in fashion’ or based on comfort and practicality? If you are wearing certain types of clothes just because others are wearing them, is it perhaps because you think you will fit in better (i.e., others will accept you better/ they will respect you/consider you to be similar to them)? Are you succumbing to ‘peer pressure’?
2. Check – Do you tend to choose clothes that are more ‘exclusive’/ expensive? If so, is it perhaps that you associate certain types of clothes with wealth or physical facility or the mark of ‘success’? Is it perhaps because you think that you will be noticed and respected by others when you wear such clothes? Do you wear such clothes even if you are not so comfortable wearing them?

It is important for us to see that who we are is not dependent on the clothes we wear. Respect is a feeling in the Self that needs to be ensured within the self and not something to get from outside. Even if you are to

wear 'exclusive' clothes, reflect on whether this will bring more respect for you in the eyes of others or whether it will bring out feelings of envy/jealousy in them for you?

When you see that clothes are merely to protect the body, you stop wearing clothes merely to impress others or to look good in the eyes of others but rather wear those clothes that are most suitable for the health of the body i.e., clothes that are clean, made of natural fibre, loose, comfortable and appropriate for the weather. In fact, India has a very rich tradition of handloom weaves that one can choose from – clothes made from such weaves are not only comfortable and breathable but may be colourful and attractive to look at too!

Footwear

Footwear (what we wear on our feet) is to protect the feet just as clothes protect the rest of the body. When we see that this is the main purpose of wearing shoes, slippers, sandals or other such footwear, we are able to make choices regarding what to wear on our feet in accordance with this purpose - so we choose footwear that is comfortable and practical (e.g., keeping the season/climate in mind).

Ask yourself the question – “How am I making my choice of footwear?” Is it on the basis of the current fashion or is it on the basis of what is comfortable and practical? For instance, wearing shoes with high heels may be the prevailing 'fashion' but what would be practical and comfortable for us to wear would be shoes with a flat or minimal heel.

Over the past century, fashion has often dictated the wearing of footwear and frequently interfered with the original purpose of footwear - protection of the foot from injury due to exposure to untoward objects like stones etc. Thus the purchase of footwear is often being dictated by fashion and not by the comfort of the shoe¹¹.

In fact, wearing footwear all the time itself may not be as essential as we may have thought it to be thus far! Try walking barefoot on the mud/soil or on the grass and observe how you feel. Do you find it cooling and refreshing?

Besides this, there are many other reasons to expose the bare feet to the ground. There is growing scientific evidence of the benefits of reconnecting with our natural surroundings in maintaining our health (e.g., the benefit of exposure to the outside air as opposed to being in recirculated or stale air indoors; exposure to sunlight as opposed to being indoors etc.)^{112,113}.

If you recall, we had said that our tradition (as also several other traditions) speak of matter being made of just a few attributes. The human body which is material in nature is also made up of these same basic attributes. Therefore, when the body is in the proximity of and in touch with these basic attributes, it helps to keep the body in good health. Modern science has already demonstrated the health benefits of exposing the body to sunlight (the attribute of warmth or heat or fire) and to fresh air while naturopathy uses water as a tool for healing the body (in the form of hydrotherapy).

Several studies in the past decade or so have demonstrated without a doubt the healing effects of walking barefoot on the ground – the body being in physical touch with the soil, the grass, the earth ('Earthing' or 'grounding' as it is referred to). This has been found to be extremely beneficial for the health of the body as a whole, the nervous system in particular and even to help reduce pain and inflammation in the various parts of the body, thus preventing it from illness and disease (depicted very well in the documentary film "The Earthing Movie" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44ddtR0XDVU>).

Also, there are many points on the soles of the feet that correspond to the many vital organs of the body. When these points are pressed, they can have an impact on the corresponding organs of the body (hence these points are also referred to as 'pressure points' and are of great significance in the healing science of 'acupressure')¹¹⁴. It is said that when you walk with bare feet on the ground, every little stone or pebble you place your foot on, naturally presses on the various pressure points and activates the internal organs linked to them, thus helping to activate the healing process in the body naturally.

Of course, it may not be so comfortable or practical to walk barefoot all the time with our current way of life. For all such times one can use footwear.

How to choose your footwear? The following tips may be helpful:

Things to keep in mind when choosing footwear¹¹⁵:

Considerations regarding the Feet

- As the body grows, the size of the feet changes – they become larger. So when choosing footwear, the most recent and appropriate foot size needs to be measured.
- For most of us one foot may be slightly larger or broader than the other, so when we measure the foot, we need to measure both feet and take the larger foot into consideration.
- The selection of the right shoe size should not be based only on the size marked inside the shoe but also on how that shoe fits on the feet. Select a shoe that is shaped like your foot.
- When choosing/selecting new shoes, always try on both shoes, take time to walk around and test them out making sure that they fit and feel right; that they are comfortable, before you finalise them. This may not always be possible in these days of online purchasing so one can be sure to purchase from sites that have an easy return and exchange policy.
- When you wear the shoes to see if they are comfortable, make sure that there is ~1cm space between your longest toe and the end of the shoe when standing upright. This will ensure that there is sufficient room at the front of the shoe to allow for the natural movement of the toes (when walking, your toes should be able to wiggle freely). Do not select/purchase shoes that feel tight and expect them to stretch to fit later.
- Make sure that the ball of the foot fits comfortably into the widest part of the shoe. Thus, the length, width and depth of the shoe, all are important.
- The heel should fit comfortably in the shoe with minimum slipping i.e., the shoe should not ride up and down the heel when you walk.

Though all of the above have been listed as separate points, merely wearing the shoes and checking to see if they are comfortable and fit right may be sufficient to be able to make the right choice.

Considerations regarding Shoes:

- Ideally, the shoe should be soft and flexible and made of a natural, breathable material that will allow good air exchange between the skin of the feet and the outside environment. This will keep the skin aired and reduce the possibility of skin irritation and infections that could be a risk in closed shoes.
- If the lining of the shoe is smooth and seam free, the shoe will be comfortable to wear and will not irritate the foot. The lining should also be made of a breathable material so as to allow free air exchange from the soles of the feet, keeping the skin fresh.
- The heel of the shoe should have a broad base and be no higher than 4 cm. (if the shoe is to be worn for long stretches, make sure that the heel is no more than 2 cm high). Low-heeled shoes are more comfortable, safer, and less damaging than high-heeled ones.

All in all, the shoe should fit well and be comfortable when worn. A shoe that fits well on the feet doesn't necessarily need to be expensive and vice versa (just because a shoe is expensive, doesn't necessarily mean that it will fit well).

We have spoken at length about selecting the right shoes. Does the footwear we choose to wear also have an impact on the health of the body? It certainly does.

Effect of Footwear on the Health of the Body:

- Studies have shown that walking with high-heeled shoes may alter the function of the joints of the lower- extremity¹¹⁶. It may raise peak pressure on the fore foot¹¹⁷ and alter the load distribution on the medial part of the foot¹¹⁸. Due to these changes, pressure on certain areas of the feet becomes more, causing pain and occasionally even foot deformity as one has to make more effort to balance while walking on high heeled shoes.
- It has also been shown that when one walks with high heeled shoes, a different set of muscles of the lower limb may get used¹¹⁹ and stressed

and this can lead to a change in the energy requirements of the lower limb¹²⁰ that may not be physiologic.

- Frey et al. reported that 88% of healthy women surveyed in USA were wearing shoes that were smaller than their feet and that 80% of them had some sort of foot deformity¹²¹.

So, it is important for us to realise that the shoes we wear need to be so designed that they serve the purpose of wearing them i.e., to protect the feet and support the feet when walking. Wearing fashionable footwear without significant regard to functionality and practicality (e.g., footwear with increasingly complex designs, incorporating high heels etc.) can lead to very unnatural gaits and even ill-health in the body as we just saw.

Hence, we need to emphasise on comfortable footwear that is properly designed and fits properly on the feet. This can relieve several minor foot ailments and help maintain the health of the feet.

At the same time, whenever you have the opportunity, walk barefoot on the earth and reconnect with the natural environment outdoors.

House (Shelter)

Just as clothes and shoes protect the body, the purpose of living in a house or home is to provide a shelter where the body can reside and be protected from inclement weather – from extremes of the external environment and natural hazards like thunderstorms, rain, lightning, floods etc.

The Connection between House and Health:

It has been known for centuries that housing conditions can affect the health of the human being – the house we live in has a definite link with the health of the body¹²². In more recent times, the WHO has also stated that improved housing conditions can prevent disease and increase the quality of life of the human being¹²³.

As an example, when the house is properly designed, with access to fresh air and sunlight into the house, it helps to keep the body in good health.

Similarly, the house can be designed so as to minimise air pollution in the house (e.g., having a smoke chimney or exhaust vent in the kitchen or cooking area and adequate ventilation in the entire house in the form of windows and ventilators to get rid of impure, stale or polluted air).

The house can be constructed some distance away from the hustle and bustle of activity so as to minimise noise pollution and can be made keeping the likely number of residents in mind so that the house is neither too big nor so small as to cause over-crowding and resultant ill health.

Once the house has been properly designed and constructed, it is up to the individual to maintain it in the right way – i.e., keep it clean and tidy, get rid of stagnated water, dispose of waste properly etc. so as to prevent the multiplication and spread of disease producing germs and insects that may lead to infectious diseases like typhoid, malaria, dengue etc.

If the house in which one stays is old, maintenance will also involve freshly painting it from time to time. Much of the paint that was used even till a few years back contained lead and flaking of such lead containing paint in poorly maintained old houses was linked with lead intoxication in children living in the house. These days, due to increased public awareness about the health problems linked to lead, the paint used in houses is largely lead free.

Similarly old buildings often used asbestos material in construction. When asbestos-containing material disintegrates with age or is otherwise damaged, it may release microscopic fibres into the air which then get inhaled into the lungs. The inhalation of such fibres over prolonged periods may result in asbestosis (asbestos- caused fibrosis of the lung), lung cancer, and even pleural or peritoneal cancer¹²⁴.

So, all in all, the house needs to be made such that it is a safe haven for the body, keeping the objective or purpose of the house (i.e., protection of the body) in focus.

House and Home:

Generally, when we say house, we are referring to the physical structure of the shelter. On the other hand, when we say ‘home’ what may come to mind

is the sense of belonging we associate with it which comes from the people in the house – our family members, our relationship with them, the bond we share with them and the feeling of security we have in their presence.

While the structure of the house has an impact on the health of the body, the home i.e., our relationships with other human beings that live in the house also have a major impact on our health. When we understand our relationships and have the right feeling for others, we are able to have healthy and fulfilling relationships with them and this is what makes the house a home (we will discuss this further when we talk about the ‘health of the family’ in the next section on ‘health of the environment’).

Right Utilisation of the Body

We saw that when we have the right understanding, we have the right feeling within (a feeling in line with our natural acceptance). When we have the right feeling within, we are in harmony (a healthy Self). We also saw that, a healthy Self, as part of the right feeling, has the feeling of responsibility towards the body to nurture it, protect it and rightly utilise it and this is what keeps the body in harmony (health). Thus, only when the Self is in harmony can it truly take care of the body and keep the body in harmony. The health of the body is thus a natural consequence of a healthy Self.

So far we have been talking about how we can nurture and protect the body. We also have the responsibility to utilise the body in the right manner. What does that mean? You can think of the body as a wonderful tool at your disposal – a highly sophisticated machine, if you will. How are you using this tool? Are you putting it to the right use?

For instance, the body is equipped with the five sense organs. These are very useful – just by smelling food you can, in many cases, find out if the food is fresh and in the right condition to eat or if it is stale and not to be eaten; when in doubt, you place a very small portion on the tip of your tongue and now, when you taste the food, you are able to decide whether it is fit to be eaten or if it should be discarded. So, this is the purpose of the sense organs.

Are you using the sense organs in the right manner? Or are you using them largely to derive some pleasure out of them, e.g., indulging in the sense of taste – eating tasty food even if it is harmful for the body or continuing to eat tasty food beyond what the body can digest i.e., overeating, leading to the body becoming overweight and unhealthy.

Similarly, the body tends to stay healthy when you make it do some regular physical activity involving movement of all the body parts. Are you doing that regularly? Or are you largely inactive –sitting at a desk, lying on the couch etc. If so, it is a sure way of making the body unhealthy.

The same body can be used to argue and fight with the other or it can be used to help the other; to dominate over the other and exploit the other or to nurture the other. Which would you call the right utilisation of the body?

There may be many such examples in our day-to-day living. We keep making choices without being aware. Now we can try and observe the choices we are making and choose with awareness, consciously.

Test Your Understanding

1. What would be the criteria for your choice of selection of the clothes you wear? What is your criteria at present? What conclusion do you draw from this?
2. On what grounds are you currently making the choice of selection of your footwear? On the basis of what you have read in the chapter, what would be the grounds on which you select your footwear now?
3. What is meant by the right utilisation of the body? Check for yourself – are you utilising your body rightly? Write down what changes you plan to make so that you are rightly utilising your body.

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Part VII

Health of the Environment

Health of the Environment

Impact of our environment (family, society, nature) on health

We saw that the human being is a co-existence of the Self (consciousness) and the body (material) and that to understand the health of the human being, it is important to understand both – the health of the Self and the health of the body; how to keep both the Self and the body healthy i.e., in harmony. For the Self to be in harmony, it needs to have the right understanding and the right feeling. We also saw that when the Self is healthy (is in harmony) and has the right feeling within, then it has the feeling of responsibility towards the body – to nurture, protect and rightly utilise the body. This leads to health in the body.

The human being is surrounded by other human beings, by plants, trees, animals ...all of these form our environment. We interact with all of these, have an impact on them and in turn are also impacted by them e.g., our interaction with trees – during the day, in presence of sunlight, the trees give out oxygen which we breathe in and the carbon-di-oxide we breathe out is taken in by the trees.

As we go along, we will see how we interact with and impact everything in our environment and how everything in our environment impacts us. We will also see that in order to understand health holistically (in completeness) and to be and stay healthy (in harmony) we need to understand the health (harmony) in the environment and we need to ensure the health of the environment.

What would be included in the health of the environment? All of the following:
Other human beings – i.e., our family members and those outside our family
Plants, trees, birds, animals, soil, earth, sun, moon etc. – i.e., nature and existence
So the health of the environment would include –

Health of the Family

Health of the Society and

Health of Nature and Existence

Let us see why it is necessary to understand our relationship with each of these, how each one of these impacts our health and see our role in ensuring the health (harmony) at each of these levels.

Chapter 29

Health of the Family

We saw that as human beings we don't live our life in isolation from others. We are all born in a family and we have a relationship with all the members of the family – our parents (mother and father), siblings (sisters, brothers), maternal and paternal grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, relatives and so many friends.

It is in the family that we grow up and are nurtured, where we are guided and cared for in sickness and in health. A loving relationship among all the family members is what makes the house a home, one that we cherish and long for when we are away from home for a while. When all the members of the family live with one another with a feeling of relationship and there is harmony in the family, we feel happy and fulfilled in the relationship.

Being a part of a loving family impacts not only our health (i.e., the health of the Self or 'Mental' health) but also the health of the body.

Studies done on babies and children in orphanages showed that children who were growing up in orphanages often tended to be undernourished¹ – they tended to have inadequate weight gain and inadequate activity despite being given adequate nourishing food². However, these same babies, when adopted by a loving family, not only gained more weight but also became more alert and active. They suddenly seemed to blossom in their new loving environment. How did this happen? Being a part of a loving family seems to have made all the difference to the health of these babies (perhaps because of the impact of a happy and fulfilled Self on the health of the body?).

But what happens if there is disharmony in a family? What happens if the members of the family do not have a feeling of relationship for one another? There may be frequent arguments and fights in the home. How do we feel when this happens? Do these arguments and fights have an impact on the way we think and feel? At such times do we feel happy or unhappy; do we feel fulfilled or unfulfilled in our relationship with our family members?

We will be able to see very clearly that whenever there is discord and tension in the family relationships, conflict among the family members, it also leads to conflict within us and when we are in conflict, we are in disharmony, we are unhappy (an unhealthy Self). Whenever we are in disharmony, we end up causing disharmony in the body → disease and ill health in the body.

Similarly, we can see what happens to children who grow up in families where family members lack the feeling of relationship for one another, where there is strife, discord and disharmony in the family - these children often have low self-esteem, are unhappy and may go into depression; they may get into substance abuse – drug/alcohol addiction etc. (all of these lead to ill health of the body); this may further lead to violence, even accidental and suicidal deaths^{3,4}.

So what is the solution? To ensure our health, we need to ensure healthy relationships among all the family members. And how do we ensure healthy relationships among all the family members? For this, we first need to understand our relationships. We need to understand that there are feelings in relationship; that these feelings are in the Self – in one Self, for the other Self. Once we understand the feelings that are naturally acceptable to us in relationship (i.e., the feelings of trust, respect, affection, care, guidance, reverence, glory, gratitude, love) and see that these feelings are definite, they can be recognised, we will also be able to see that when we ensure these feelings within us, we feel happy. And when we share these feelings with the other, it leads to happiness in the other also. Thus there is mutual happiness and we are fulfilled in our relationships.

For understanding relationships and ensuring the right feeling within us, we need the right understanding. We already saw how feelings borne of right understanding lead to harmony within us (a healthy Self) and how a healthy self takes responsibility for the body and keeps it in harmony (a healthy body). On the other hand, feelings in the absence of right understanding may lead to contradiction and disharmony in the Self (an unhealthy Self) and an unhealthy Self does not take responsibility for the body and disrupts the harmony in the body, causing ill-health.

To understand each of the individual feelings mentioned above in detail

and to see how you can have harmonious relationships, refer to the book 'A foundation course in Human values and Professional ethics' (listed in the bibliography).

Here we will keep our focus on how we can ensure the health of the family as a whole, once we have harmonious relationships with one another in the family.

Implementation of Health in the Family:

When we consider the implementation of health in the family, we need to consider both aspects:

The health of the Self and

The health of the Body

Let us take a look at each of these one by one.

The Health of the Self

It is extremely important to pay attention to the health/harmony in the Self in addition to the health/ harmony in the body (as we saw, health in the body is dependent on the health in the Self) - and this is important for every member of the family. Parents and elders can check if they are paying attention to the Self of every child in the family (in addition to taking care of the body). For instance, when feeding the child, we pay attention to the need of the body and provide food that is nurturing for the child's body. Do we also pay attention to the need of the Self for happiness? Or do we forcefully make the child eat at the cost of making the Self unhappy?

Health in the Self and fulfilment in relationship in the family is the need of every self in the family. The following suggestions may be helpful:

1. Togetherness and communication in the family

Family activities can be structured in a way that they promote togetherness and bonding. Ample time can be kept for communicating feelings and thoughts with one another and for discussing one's fulfilment in relationship (or the lack of it) with one another. Effort can be

made to support one another with a feeling of complementarity in the relationship, thus helping to ensure the health of every self in the family (regardless of gender, age etc.).

We can learn some lessons from the past when it was common to see traditional Indian joint families in which a family typically included a minimum of three generations of individuals comprising children of different ages, adults and the elderly. When all the varied members of the family are fulfilled in relationship, such a family can be a wonderful and supportive structure for all the family members but if there is lack of fulfilment in relationship, this very structure can become a source of misery and unhappiness.

How is such a joint family structure helpful? When the children are small and the parents are busy working outside the home/running the household the grandparents can fill in and provide guidance to the children. While the parents are busy, grandparents are likely to be at home and have plenty of time on their hands. The grandparents can involve the children in outdoor activities in the proximity of nature or even enjoy togetherness with the children while at the same time giving them guidance in the form of stories at a daily designated 'story time'. The relationship thus becomes highly fulfilling for both – for the children because they are able to share their thoughts and feelings and also for the grandparents who now see a purpose for themselves and no longer wallow in self-pity lamenting about their old age and infirm body, their inability to participate in physical activity etc.

An unfortunate consequence of nuclear families is that the parents (often busy at work outside/within the home, lacking time) are unable to spend time with their children and unable to provide them with the right guidance when they are growing up. Such children then grow up lacking understanding, are unhappy (and unhealthy) and are unable to keep the body healthy.

Another unfortunate consequence of being a part of a nuclear family is that children often grow up without getting to know their grandparents, without spending time with them or bonding with them and without

learning or being guided by them. The grandparents too, when living by themselves, far away from their children, become lonely and miss the company of their children and grandchildren – a situation that is unfulfilling for both.

2. Early start to Self - Exploration

It has been seen that children as young as 2-3 years of age are able to grasp the concept of the Self and to seek answers from their natural acceptance when given the right proposals in a way that is understandable by them and when guided by elders in the family.

If these proposals have not been given in the early formative years, at least when the children start school, their attention can be drawn to the Self and the natural acceptance in the Self of all human beings. This can provide the children with an awareness of the tools for self-exploration which are already there within them and the comfort of having access to the natural acceptance as their internal compass to guide them along in life.

3. Discussions regarding the purpose of the Self

As children become older, start high school or college and even later, once they start work as young adults, regular family discussions can be held about more profound questions like the purpose of the Self, the purpose of life itself etc. Such discussions can be very fruitful for the fulfilment of the need of the Self to know.

The Health of the Body

When it comes to the health of the body of the family members, at the level of the individual the program for health would be the same as the one mentioned earlier (having the right intake, a daily routine in synchronisation with the day and night rhythm and with the seasonal rhythms, along with devoting some time exclusively to labour and exercise and yoga and pranayama daily. This could be supplemented with home remedies readily available in every home).

Only when such a program is not implemented and the body goes into disharmony temporarily, would one need to consult a doctor for medication or, if things are beyond repair, for treatment whereby one would have to resort to the aid of instruments, machines or other equipment to take over the function of a body organ (e.g., resorting to insulin injections in severe Diabetes Mellitus when the body's secretion of insulin is insufficient to meet the demand of the rapid surges in the body's blood sugar levels).

It must however, be pointed out here, that for the most part, if the steps of the program for health are followed sincerely, the health of the body is likely to be a natural outcome and no external aids would need to be resorted to (even conditions like Diabetes Mellitus, hypertension etc., once diagnosed can be reversed). This is because the self-organisation of the human body is such that if it is properly taken care of, it can function till a ripe old age with minimal deterioration of body parts (organs, tissues etc.).

Although the program for health in the family is similar to the one for the individual, there are some basic family needs that are unique and need to be addressed. For instance, a family often comprises individuals of various ages and various different capabilities - children who are very young or the elderly who are very old are likely to have differing dietary needs from others in the family; they may also require assistance for taking care of the health of the body. Several of the family members may also have different body constitutions and therefore slightly differing needs for maintaining their body health.

The following are a few suggestions that may assist in maintaining the health of the family as a whole, keeping in mind the unique needs of a family (many of these had been incorporated in the traditional family systems but have largely been forgotten now or discarded in favour of a more 'modern' or 'practical' approach but it may be time now to bring some of these traditions back, to aid the current system of health in becoming sustainable and fulfilling for all). Here are the suggestions:

1. Designated family member for Health

Every individual family member who is fit and able can take responsibility

for the health of his/her own body. For those family members who are unable to do so, one specific family member can be designated to take responsibility for the health of the body of all those family members who are unable to take care of it themselves (e.g., very young children, the elderly and the sick or infirm) - this responsibility was traditionally taken up by the elder lady of the house.

2. Healthy Food

The family member designated for health can take responsibility for the specific food requirements of every individual member of the family as needed (e.g., an elderly member of the family lacking teeth and unable to chew food, may require a very soft 'dal' and rice 'khichdi' in place of chapatti; similarly, a family member with a specific ailment like 'viral hepatitis' or 'jaundice' may require a diet restricted to plenty of liquids, fruit and steamed or soupy vegetables cooked without the use of fats like oil/butter etc. until he/she gets better). Foods can be so planned that simple modifications made when cooking or preparing meals can make it suitable for the different body constitutions of the family members (e.g., adding extra ghee to the food of one who has a predominantly air-space body constitution with a tendency to dryness of the body).

3. Healthy Daily Routine

The daily family routine can be maintained such that it is conducive to health - all family members can be encouraged to rise early and have timely toilet and bath activities. Exposure to sunlight and outdoor activities including physical exercise of the body can be incorporated in the form of a daily family activity - e.g., all the family members engaging in natural farming, kitchen gardening etc. together). Similarly, meals can be had together by all the family members with the designated member for health, ensuring that meal times are in synch with the natural day-night rhythm of nature and that the appropriate bedtime is adhered to by all the family members.

4. Healthy Activities

The family as a whole can together be involved in activities that promote

the health of the body e.g., yoga and pranayama, starting a kitchen garden (or roof top garden if land space is not available), making compost from kitchen waste and using it to nurture plants so that the family can consume natural and chemical free vegetables grown in their own garden/farm and enjoy better health and, in addition, better taste as well.

The family as a whole can replace harmful chemical cleansers with natural cleaning agents e.g., bio-enzyme cleansers made from citrus fruit peel. These will not only help keep the house clean but also ensure better health for the whole family (and for nature).

Similarly, the family member designated for health can ensure healthy cooking practices at home e.g., cooking food on low flame, avoiding frequent deep frying of foods etc. The family can collectively decide to keep only healthy foods at home and avoid getting packaged foods from outside that may be high on taste but very low on health. Such practices can keep the entire family healthy.

5. Home remedies

The designated family member, if not already familiar, can become familiar with the various common herbs and spices often used in cooking and readily available in the kitchen of every home. She (or he) can become familiar with their qualities and their use as specific home remedies - for preventing ill-health and maintaining the health of the body of all the family members and for using as medicine for those who have sickness or ill health in the body.

Test Your Understanding

1. Refer to the book 'A foundation course in Human values and Professional ethics' (listed in the bibliography) and read the chapter on harmony in the family specifically the feeling of trust (the foundation value).
2. Whenever there are arguments or fights among you and your family members, do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable inside? Why do you think you are uncomfortable within - is it because of you/ yourself or is

it because of your family members?

In all your relationships, check - is your focus on giving and sharing or expecting and taking i.e., are you making the effort to “ensure” the right feelings in yourself and expressing them to the other or are you “expecting” these feelings from the other?

When you have an argument, do you attempt to say sorry and patch up or do you wait for the other to do so? Which of the two do you think is likely to lead to harmony in the family? Which do you think could lead to the possibility of lasting happiness for you and your family members?

3. What efforts are you making to ensure health in your family?

Try and get all the members of the family to participate in a regular daily practice (e.g., yoga, pranayama etc.) for ensuring health in the family. Do this practice daily for a week and observe any noticeable changes. Record your observations and ask your family members also to record their observations on changes they have been able to notice e.g., change in appetite, change in overall mood, change in alertness, feeling happy about doing activities together etc.

Having participated in such activities with your family members, how do you feel- happy or unhappy; comfortable inside or uncomfortable inside? Record your observations and conclusions from this exercise.

Chapter 30

Health of the Society

We started with the human being and saw how the human being is a co-existence of Self and body. We saw that while the need of the Self is for continuous happiness, the need of the body is for physical facility. The need of the Self for happiness in continuity is fulfilled by right understanding and right feeling within the Self leading to harmony in the Self. This is a healthy Self. We also saw that when the Self is in harmony and has the right feeling, it has a feeling of responsibility towards the body. So with a feeling of self-regulation, the Self keeps the body in harmony (health).

For the Self to fulfil its responsibility towards the body (to nurture, protect and rightly utilise it), physical facility is required. When the Self has the right understanding, it understands that the need of physical facility is only for the body and thus is able to identify this need correctly. Once the need is correctly identified, the Self may realise that there is already more than required physical facility. This feeling of having more than required physical facility is the feeling of prosperity. A harmonious Self maintaining harmony in the body is a healthy human being.

Then we went on to see how, as human beings, we don't live in isolation but are a part of a family. The family strives to work together for their common goal of happiness and prosperity. Similarly, human families do not exist in isolation but are always in mutual co-existence with other families - as a group of families. We can also see that our family relations are naturally extended far and wide. We meet and interact with various other human beings also on a day to day basis and all of these form our society. Happy, prosperous and healthy families living together in a relationship of mutual fulfilment form the basis for a happy, prosperous and healthy society - one in which there is fearlessness and trust- this is a society in harmony - a healthy society.

A society in harmony does not become a cause for interference in the

harmony of the individual Self and when the Self remains in harmony, it then does not interfere with the inherent harmony of the body. Also, in a healthy society in which all the families are prosperous, the need for physical facility (to keep the body healthy) is readily met i.e., a healthy society is also instrumental in helping to keep the individual human beings in the society healthy (in harmony at the level of the Self and the body).

On the other hand, an unhealthy society (one in which there is lack of understanding and lack of relationship) lacks prosperity; instead of prosperity, the goal in such a society is assumed to be one of accumulation by any means - due to this there is domination, exploitation and lack of trust ...such a society propagates fear. If we continue to live in fear, being uncomfortable and unhappy (in disharmony within), we are plagued by stress, anxiety etc. and we end up interfering with the harmony of the body, making the body unhealthy (with problems linked to stress and anxiety e.g., decreased immunity making the body susceptible to infections, anxiety related disorders like acidity, gastric ulcers, insomnia or sleeplessness etc.).

So how can we change this situation? What is the solution to an unhealthy society with injustice, exploitation, lack of trust and fear? We all do want a healthy, happy and prosperous society but how do we go about it? Where do we start?

The start to a healthy society

We said that a society is made up of families which in turn are made up of individual human beings. So, in order to transform an unhealthy society into a healthy society, we need to have happiness and prosperity in every family (i.e., a healthy family) and for this we need to have happiness and the feeling of prosperity in every human being (i.e., a healthy Self with a healthy body). For this to happen in the society, we need to start within ourselves - to bring about this transformation within the Self (with right understanding and right feeling) and, with a feeling of self-regulation, take responsibility for the body and make a program to keep it healthy.

In the last chapter we saw how the program for health can be moulded into one for the entire family with activities involving all the family members. As

a healthy family, we can then expand the definition of the family to include our neighbours, close friends and relatives, people in our community etc. With an acceptance of our relationship with all of them, we can then take the initiative and, with a feeling of responsibility towards the relationship, make effort for bringing about a transformative change in them and in the entire society of which we are a part. This is our role (participation) in the harmony of the society.

What could be a systematic way of accomplishing the human goals of right understanding and right feeling (happiness) in every individual, prosperity in every family, fearlessness (trust) in society and co-existence in nature and existence?

It is proposed that we work on five basic dimensions or systems of human order that are interconnected and complementary to one another and which can help accomplish all these goals. These five basic dimensions are:

1. Education-sanskar (→ Right Understanding and Right feeling)
2. Health – Self-regulation (→ Health for all)
3. Production-Work (→ Prosperity in every family)
4. Justice-Preservation (→ Fearlessness and Co-existence respectively)
5. Exchange-Storage (→ Prosperity and hence fearlessness)

The first dimension - Education-sanskar (→ Right Understanding and Right feeling) is the focus of the book “A foundation course in human values and professional ethics” mentioned in the bibliography (the remaining dimensions are also briefly mentioned in this book).

Here, our focus is on the second dimension - Health – Self-regulation (→ Health for all).

We have already looked at how we can implement health in the individual and in the family. Now let us take a look at how we can have health in the society – what kind of health systems we can set up to have a healthy society catering to the well- being of all individuals in the society.

Implementing health at the level of the Society (Health Systems):

Our current system for health has a focus on medicine and treatment. Now we can look at implementing health in the society keeping our focus on health. Such health systems can be viewed from two separate angles:

1. Systems at the level of the individual, the family, the community – systems that are decentralised
2. Systems that help set up the society in such a way that the decentralised systems can function with ease and the vision of health for all becomes a reality – these are the Centralised systems.

Let us look at the proposals for each of these one by one.

Decentralised Health Systems

These are informal systems that function in a very natural and self-organised manner with perhaps a little support from the structured and more formal centralised systems. Listed below are some pointers/suggestions on how such a system could function.

1. For the most part, every individual human being to take responsibility for his/her own health i.e., the health of the Self and the health of the body (rather than depending only on doctors, hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, insurance companies etc. in times of disharmony).
2. Every individual to focus on staying healthy with the program of health as mentioned earlier i.e., have an intake and daily routine that is conducive for health and incorporate labour, exercise, body postures, regulated breathing etc. in the daily routine activities (rather than focus on disease, its detection and treatment).
3. Every family to help the children in the family to develop the feeling of self-regulation and to have appropriate practices for health. This can be done with the help of one designated family member taking responsibility for the health education of all the members of the family, especially the children (a role/responsibility that was traditionally taken up by the eldest lady in the home).

4. A family system that provides a conducive environment for appropriate intake, routine, labour, exercise etc. as a part of the natural system of the family for maintaining health and one that has the skills and means to deal with minor ailments with the use of home remedies by the designated member for health in the family.
5. Several families as a group or cluster to designate one family for helping with the health education and health maintenance of all the families in that group. Similarly, few responsible representatives from the group/ cluster... → healthy community → healthy village--healthy district--city
6. Health and health awareness programs to be incorporated into the regular group or community activities, get-togethers, festivals etc. where people meet on a regular basis

e.g., celebrating the festival of 'Holi' as a community with the conscious decision to use natural/herbal colours rather than artificial colours which could harm the skin and cause allergic reactions, skin rashes etc.).
7. The setting up of a daily early morning regimen by one or two responsible individuals leading others in the practice of exercise/postures/breath regulation etc. in a designated common space like a community park.
8. Setting aside of a large piece of land in every community as a common area for organic or natural farming using cyclic, mutually enriching processes; having the families in the community take ownership of this and participate in this activity or support it (this would ensure the availability of natural, pesticide free foods for the consumption of all the people in the community).
9. Farmers already in the process of natural farming and cow keeping of indigenous breeds of cows (desi cows) to be assured of support from the families in the community (ensuring the provision of A2 milk for the entire community).

Centralised Health Systems

The centralised health systems can focus on two distinct areas:

1. System for Health Education
2. System for Health Maintenance
 - i. System for Maintaining the Harmony (Health)
 - ii. System for Correcting disharmony

Formal/Structured system of Health Education:

1. Focus of ‘medical’ education on health

The current focus of health systems and health education is largely on disease and its management for life (a system focused on medicine and treatment). What is being proposed is a system where the focus of education is on health and its maintenance and the occasional use of medication as required, with treatment being reserved as a last resort.

2. Integration of complementary streams of ‘medicine’

Presently, ‘medical’/health education is geared to an independent and separate teaching of the different streams i.e., separate colleges and infrastructure for teaching Allopathy and separate ones for Ayurveda, Naturopathy etc.). What is being proposed is an integrated system of health education that incorporates the teaching of the modern as well as traditional systems in common institutions with common infrastructure; institutions where students are familiarized with the basic fundamental key principles of each of these (e.g., the fundamental principles of Ayurveda, Naturopathy, Homeopathy, Acupressure etc.) so that they can be used in an integrated manner in a way that all are complimentary to one another.

3. Focus of health education to shift from body to Self + body

The role of the Self in the health of a human being needs to be incorporated and highlighted in Medical (health) education. Students will be able to see that it is the Self that is central to human existence and that the body

is merely being used by the Self as a tool or instrument; they will be able to see that symptoms in the body can often be traced back to the Self (whenever the Self is in disharmony it leads to disharmony/ill- health in the body) and when it comes to mental health, what is important is to keep the Self healthy (the use of medication may help with the symptoms in the body temporarily, but for sustaining the health of the body, the focus has to shift to the Self).

4. Medical (health) education to have a holistic view

The human being is not isolated but rather is very intricately and deeply inter-connected with and inter- dependent on the health of the family, the society and even all of nature and existence – this holistic view of health is proposed for students to explore. Students may be able to see the impact of

- the family on the health of the family members e.g., the impact of a broken home (or one with lack of fulfillment in relationship), especially on the children growing up in the house (low self-esteem, often compounded by problems like depression, substance abuse etc.)⁵;
- the impact of an unhealthy society on the health of its individuals (e.g., emotions like fear, anxiety etc. leading to isolation, stress and conditions like neuroses, paranoia etc.)^{6,7} and
- the impact of disharmony in nature and existence on the health of human beings (e.g., the growing incidence of cancers associated with the increasing use of pesticides and fertilisers for growing food, the rising incidence of asthma with increasing pollution of the environment etc.)^{8,9}.

5. A system promoting a mind-set of service with a feeling of mutual fulfillment rather than merely as a for profit business. Affordable medical education to be provided for all those sincerely interested and with a mindset to serve the community.

6. A shift in the focus of medical (health) education from medicine and treatment, specialisation and super specialisation to family based

primary health care with an effort towards a resurgence of the system of family health (one ‘family’ doctor taking the responsibility to promote health and to help correct ill-health in a large number of families).

7. Mandating of Societal systems for increasing health education and health awareness -

e.g., mandating the teaching of health education as a regular daily subject in schools along with practical sessions incorporating the significance of intake, postures, breath regulation etc. in a daily school routine in line with the rhythm of nature (like appropriate timing for exercise, appropriate lunch timing etc.)

e.g., mandating of sessions on health awareness by health professionals in all work establishments and institutions.

Health Maintenance:

While health education is focused on providing the right education about health in a structured way, it is proposed that the focus of structured systems of health maintenance be on supporting the maintenance of health (harmony) in all individuals in the society and on correcting the ill-health (disharmony). The following are some proposed suggestions.

i. Maintaining the harmony

- a. All primary, middle and high schools to have a daily routine that gives priority to the health of the school students – daily school routine to be in harmony with the daily circadian rhythm e.g., provision of time and guidance for daily exercise, yoga, pranayama etc. in the morning, ample and timely break for lunch at noon etc.
- b. Work environment also to be sensitive to the health needs of the employees. Thus, young adults in corporates, conglomerates, companies, banks etc. to be provided with or to be given a timely break for meals and to have a daily work routine in sync with the circadian rhythm with provision of time for exercise and early closure of the work day so that employees may have sufficient quality time with their families and can go to sleep at the right time.

Similarly, women in the work force to have several months of time off from work during pregnancy, delivery and lactation (i.e., ample maternity leave) along with the option of part-time work/work from home after the end of maternity leave or if they have a child under 5 years of age (because a mother's presence at home is essential in the formative years of a child's development in order for the blossoming of the child's full potential).

ii. Correcting the disharmony.

- a. Home care/day care to be the default method for correcting disharmony/imbalance in health in preference to hospitalization (unless absolutely necessary).
- b. Health centres to be more patient/people friendly with sensitivity towards the needs of sick individuals (e.g., a sick patient to be provided care and service in the same place without having to register in one place, go to another to consult the doctor and then go to a third place to get the medicine).
- c. Health professionals to shift focus from disease/treatment to health, health awareness and counselling
- d. Health professionals to give priority to non-invasive modalities for correcting imbalance/disharmony whenever possible (e.g., using oral rehydration solutions for the correction of dehydration and using IV fluids only when absolutely necessary)
- e. All health centres and hospitals to be equipped with integrated systems of care that are complementary (e.g., Ayurveda, Allopathy, Homeopathy, Naturopathy, Acupressure etc.) where health professionals with a working knowledge of all systems are available.
- f. Systems to support ethical practices in health professionals
e.g., preference to be given to non-invasive methods for correcting disharmony and no extra monetary gain to be had by health professionals whether they correct the disharmony through treatment (surgery/invasive method) or by medication (non-invasive).

e.g., no extra monetary gain for a health professional whether delivering a baby by caesarian section or whether conducting a normal delivery

Similarly, no added advantage/incentive allowed to be given to any doctor, nurse, hospital, lab etc. for ill health in an individual; therefore, strictly no monetary gain to any health professional for referring a patient to a hospital, laboratory etc.

In this manner, with the help of supportive systems in society, effort can be made for the well-being of all in a healthy society. The systems can be supportive but ultimately, for the process to sustain, it requires the right understanding in all and self-organisation in all so that they can take responsibility for their own health (health of the Self - having harmony within at all times) and, with the feeling of self-regulation, maintain the health/harmony of the body.

Test Your Understanding

1. Try to introduce one healthy food item in your college canteen – one that is nutritious, digestible, tasty and one whose waste is excretable. You can do this as a class project – all the students in the class can be divided into 2 or 3 groups and each group can take responsibility for the introduction of 1 healthy food item in the college canteen.
2. Try to incorporate a health program in one of the regular activities in your community e.g., incorporate an educational or health awareness program in a community festival or incorporate a health regimen (e.g., one that involves an exposure to the natural external environmental attributes along with the inclusion of postures and breath regulation) in an informal community gathering. This could even be followed by a healthy and hearty picnic breakfast in the outdoors with a contributory home-cooked dish from each home. This will help maintain not just health in the body but will also contribute to harmony in the society.
3. Start any one project that could contribute to the health and harmony in the society as a part of a decentralised (self-organised) system

e.g., getting the families in your community to come together and support entrepreneurs with businesses conducive to health (for instance those keeping indigenous breeds of cows and providing A2 milk to the community, those doing natural farming and the sale of chemical and pesticide free foods directly to the consumer, those with shops selling organic and health foods etc.).

Chapter 31

Health (Harmony) in Nature

So far we have seen that we have a natural acceptance for living in harmony within, living as a harmonious family and as a harmonious society and that harmony at all these levels has a bearing on our health (health of the self and the health of the body).

Now let us take a look at nature. Does nature have a bearing on our health? It is very obvious that clean air, water and soil are essential for the health of the body. However, we find today that there is pollution of all of these and this is having an impact on our health (e.g., polluted air leading to a rising incidence of asthma, polluted water causing gastro-enteritis and other stomach related ailments, polluted soil leading to cancers etc.).

Let us take a closer look at nature and try to understand where the problem is. Is the pattern of nature, one of inherent harmony or is it one of chaos and disharmony?

Nature as a Collection of Units

We may be able to notice that nature is a collection of units. The air, water, soil, plants, trees, animals, birds, other human beings, even things at a great distance from us e.g., the sun, moon, stars, other planets etc. are all units that are a part of nature. Each unit exists as an individual entity and may vary from a unit as small as an atom to ones as large as the sun, stars etc.

The Four Orders

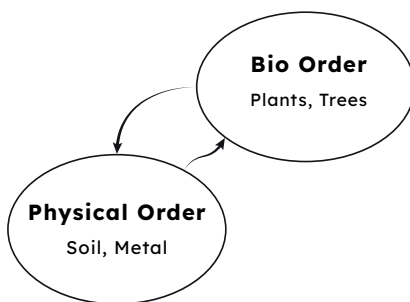
Since there are innumerable units in nature, understanding them would be a formidable task if we had to study each and every unit. However, when we classify these units into 'orders' based on their characteristics, this task becomes much simpler - once we understand the characteristics or properties of one order, we understand the characteristics of all units

belonging to that order; so if we understand the characteristics of the four orders, we understand the characteristics of all the units in nature. These four orders are:

1. Physical Order – e.g., units like air, water, soil, metal etc.
2. Bio Order – e.g., plants, trees etc.
3. Animal Order – e.g., animals like cats, dogs, tigers etc. and birds
4. Human Order – Human beings

Interconnectedness and Mutual Fulfilment among the four orders

When we take a closer look at these four orders in nature, we find that there is an inherent interconnectedness between them. If we look at the first three orders, we can see that they are not only interconnected but are also mutually fulfilling for one another.



Mutual Fulfilment between
Physical Order and Bio Order

Figure - 31.1

For example, the soil, water and air (units of the physical order) provide the basic material for plants to develop and grow – when the soil is fertile and sufficient water is available, seeds germinate and grow into plants and trees. The units of the physical order thus nourish the units of the bio order. Similarly, when the leaves, flowers and fruit from the plants and trees fall to the ground and degenerate they are

converted back to soil. These now act as manure for the soil, making it more fertile. Plants also contribute to maintaining the oxygen content in air, participate in the water cycle on earth etc. In this way the units of the bio order also fulfil the units of the physical order.

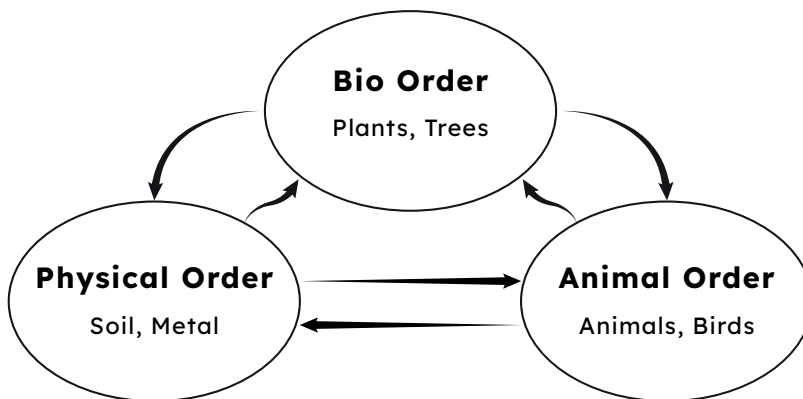
Thus we can make two observations:

1. The process is cyclic (soil is converted into plants and plants are converted back into soil)

2. The process is mutually enriching, mutually fulfilling (plants get enriched by the soil and the soil is also enriched by the plants).

This is an example of the interconnectedness and relationship of mutual fulfilment between the physical order and the bio order.

Now if we observe the animal order along with the physical and the bio order, we will see that the units of the animal order (e.g., animals and birds) depend on the bio order (e.g., plants) for their food. For instance, a cow (animal order) eats grass (bio order). So the bio order is fulfilling for the animal order. The units of the animal order also depend on the physical order (e.g., water, air etc.) for their survival. So the physical order is also fulfilling for the animal order. Similarly, animals and birds help to spread the seeds of plants from one place to another – the animal order is fulfilling for the bio order. The dung of animals acts as manure for the soil, thus enriching the soil – so the animal order is also fulfilling for the physical order.



**Mutual Fulfilment amongst
Physical Order, Bio Order and Animal Order**

Figure - 31.2

If we observe a forest, we can see that these three orders exist together - there are soil, rocks, air, water bodies like ponds etc. (units of the physical order) along with trees, plants, shrubs etc. (units of the bio order) and birds and animals (units of the animal order). And all these orders are mutually fulfilling for each other – they enrich and fulfil each other on their own – without any human intervention! The diversity of plants, birds and animals found in a forest is evidence of this phenomenon in nature.

Now let us see what happens when we place the human being in this picture. We can see that these three orders are enriching for the human being –the air that we breathe, the water that we drink, these are units of the physical order that are essential for the survival of the human body. Similarly, the units of the bio-order (e.g., plants and trees) provide fruit, vegetables, grains etc. which are required by the body as food. Coming to units of the animal order, we can see that we get milk, wool etc. from animals. Bullocks have been used by human beings for cultivating the land; horses, bullocks etc. have been used to draw carts (as means of transport). We take the help of dogs for security, crime detection etc.

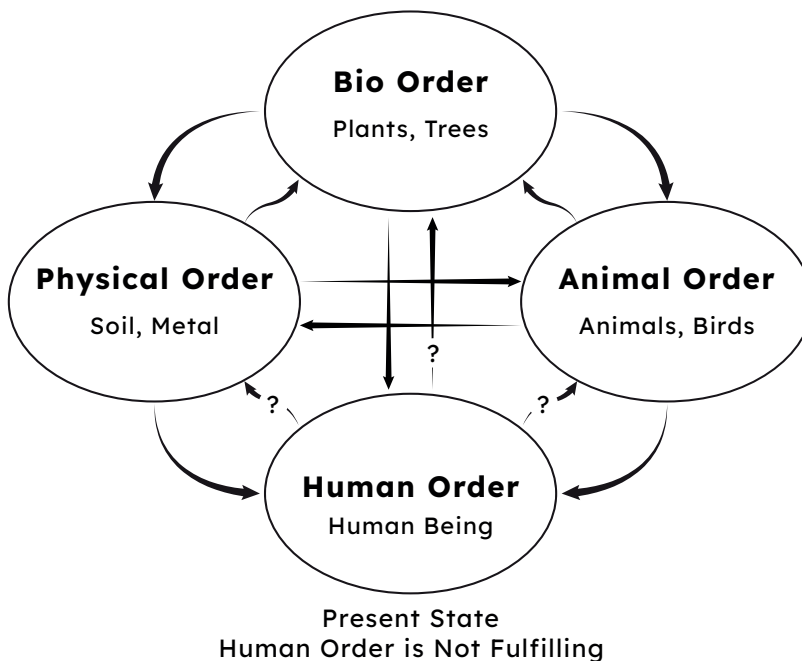


Figure - 31.3

So we can see that all these three orders are fulfilling for us human beings. What about the human being? Are we fulfilling for the other three orders? If we ask ourselves this question, the answer is pretty obvious – not only are we not fulfilling for the other three orders, rather we are exploiting the other three orders and trying to dominate over them. And this has led to major problems like pollution of the air, water and soil; drying up of lakes, rivers and underground water reserves; problems of deforestation, global warming.....and the list goes on and on.

If we can see that as human beings, we are also a part of this nature, we will see that we are interconnected to it – we are not isolated from it. When we harm nature, we harm ourselves - when we use harmful pesticides to grow our crops in the hope of more yield and more profit, we not only end up consuming these very pesticides in the food we eat (leading to major health problems like cancers) but we also damage the soil making it infertile and barren in the long run. Similarly, when we cut down large numbers of trees, we are cutting down our own oxygen supply without which we cannot survive; large scale deforestation also leads to depletion of underground water which would otherwise have been retained in the soil by the tree roots - this causes water shortage and resulting crises. So we are damaging everything that is essential for our own health, in fact that is essential for our survival.

If we ask ourselves the question –“What is naturally acceptable to us, to enrich all the four orders or to exploit them?” it is clear that we have a natural acceptance to enrich all the four orders. When we have a feeling that is naturally acceptable to us, we are in harmony. We are comfortable within, we are happy with that feeling. On the contrary, whenever we have a feeling that is not naturally acceptable to us (not in line with our natural acceptance), we are uncomfortable within, we are in disharmony, we are unhappy with that feeling. This is an unhealthy Self.

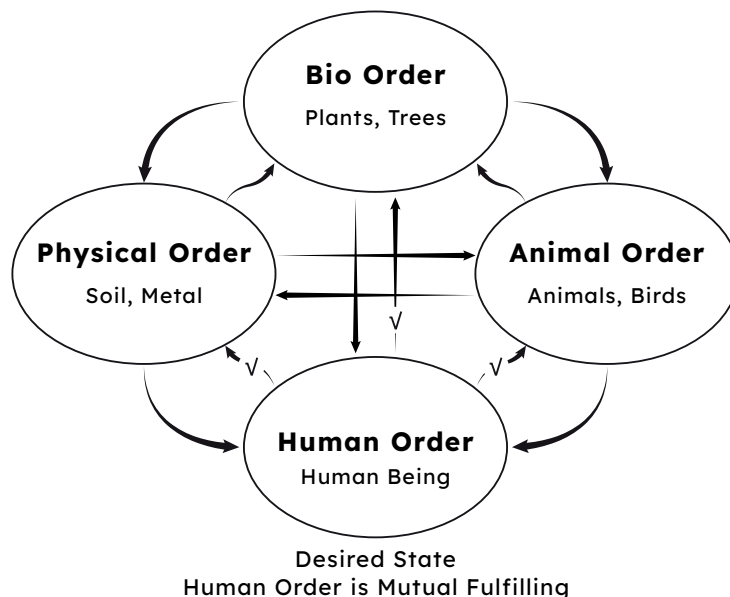


Figure - 31.4

Thus we can see that when we go against our own natural acceptance, we are unhappy (an unhealthy Self) and, lacking happiness within, we keep trying to seek happiness from outside through more money, more profit etc. and in this process end up polluting and depleting natural resources threatening our very survival on the Earth! And all because we have not understood the inherent harmony in nature and not been able to see that nature is fulfilling for us but it will continue to be so only when we are fulfilling for nature too. When we pay attention to our natural acceptance, we find that we can also be fulfilling for nature.

Self-Regulation in Nature

We can also notice that nature is, by design, self-regulated. It does not need the human being to try and regulate it.

Take the example of a forest- the proportion of soil, plants, animals and birds of various species is well regulated in a forest. It never happens that the tall trees prevent the grass from growing or that the lions eat up all the deer and the deer become extinct, or the deer eat up all the grass and there is no grass left, or there is so much grass that no other plants can grow or there is not enough soil for the grass and plants to grow....

Let us take another example; let us look at the human body. The temperature of the human body is maintained at about 37 degrees centigrade (i.e., 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit) even though the human being may be living in a region where the ambient environmental temperature is much lower or much higher.

These are all examples of the self-regulation in nature.

Abundance in Nature

Nature is organised in such a way that the physical facility that is required for any order to exist is already available for it in abundance. For instance the bio order requires the physical order (air, water, soil etc.) to grow. We can see that first there is soil, then moss is formed, then grass appears and then there are small plants, shrubs and then trees. We can also see that more than enough soil, water and air are available for plants to exist and thrive.

Similarly, animals and birds require both, the physical order and the bio order, to survive. We can see that both these orders are available in far greater quantities in nature as compared to the quantity of animals and birds. There is never any shortage of physical facility for any of the animals or birds in the forest.

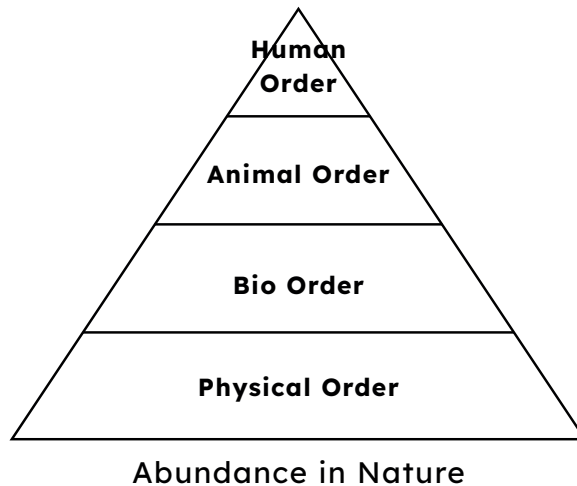


Figure - 31.5

Human beings require all these three orders to survive and the quantity of these three orders is far more than the quantity (number) of human beings.

Thus, nature is organised in such a way that the quantity of these four orders is in the following sequence: Physical order>> Bio order>> Animal order>> Human order.

Dependence of the human being on the other three orders

One important observation we can make from the description of the organisation of nature given above is that an order is dependent on all the orders that came into existence before it. We can see that the physical order can exist and sustain itself without any support from the other orders (air, water, soil etc. do not depend on the units of any other order for their existence).

The units of the bio order, however, are dependent on the units of the physical order for their existence. Without the presence of soil, water, air etc., the units of the bio order cannot survive.

Similarly, the units of the animal order are dependent on both – the air and water of the physical order as well as on the units of the bio order for their food. Both these previous orders are required for the animal order to survive.

In the same manner, the human order is dependent on all the other three orders for its existence and survival. Thus if the lower order is disturbed, it is the higher order which will primarily get affected the most! So if there is any disturbance in the harmony in nature, it is the human being who will have to bear the brunt of this disturbance – the human being will be the first to disappear from the face of the earth!

To prevent this from happening, the only solution is to understand the harmony in nature and live in harmony – be fulfilling for the other three orders just as they are fulfilling for us.

Our Participation – Living in Harmony

So what is our role? We need to understand the balance and harmony that is inherent in nature and help to maintain it by playing our part (role) in it. With this understanding, we will see that we can ensure our prosperity and at the same time ensure prosperity in nature by using the natural resources wisely (taking only as much as we need and not more and rightly utilising what we have). When we ensure prosperity in nature, we ensure the purity of the air we breathe, an abundance of clean and safe water to drink and naturally grown food that is nurturing for the body – all of this leads to good health in the body.

On the other hand, as discussed earlier, when we think of ourselves as isolated and do not see our interconnectedness with nature, we assume that there is a struggle for survival and we try to take more and more from nature at any cost; we dominate and try to have mastery over nature causing a disturbance in its natural harmony and balance. And this eventually results in damaging effects on the health of the body. Examples: pesticides in the soil causing cancers as mentioned earlier, rapidly increasing mosquito population in cities leading to health consequences like malaria, dengue etc. (worsened by attempts like fogging/spraying chemicals which further pollute the air causing increased asthma and respiratory infections) and so on.

Ways in which we can participate in maintaining the health in Nature

We will find that the following are not only fulfilling for nature but also fulfilling for us:

- Planting trees, shrubs and plants in or around our homes is highly beneficial – for instance, fruit trees give us fruit, trees of medicinal value (e.g., neem) and plants that emit oxygen by day and night (e.g., tulsi)
- Reducing harmful emissions from vehicles – using non-motorised two wheelers like bicycles instead of motorised ones helps the nature stay in harmony; it also ensures much needed exercise for the body and helps the body stay in harmony too.
- Avoiding or minimising the use of air conditioners; this avoids disruption of the harmony in nature as well as avoids disruption of the harmony in the body - it is a well-known fact that sudden and rapid temperature fluctuations lead to disharmony in the body¹⁰ (as with being in and out of a cool, air conditioned room and into hotter temperatures several times in the course of the day). This ultimately leads to ill-health/sickness¹¹.
- Substituting standard refrigerators with nature friendly ones e.g., the ‘mitti cool’ fridge etc. (this keeps raw vegetables fresh without drying them up). When it comes to cooked vegetables, it is best to consume these within a few hours of preparation rather than to keep them in refrigerators, reheat and eat them later – this is harmful for the health of the body and is best avoided or minimised^{12,13}.
- Using natural/herbal washing powders, floor and toilet cleaners, using bath powders (in place of soaps) etc. and avoiding the use of harmful chemicals in our bathrooms - natural/herbal powders are not only nature friendly but also human friendly (better for the health of the body).
- When we use natural and herbal powders in our bathroom, the waste water from the bathroom can then be directed to recharging the ground water through pits, to plants etc. We can also recycle rain water and thus utilise it better – use it for our needs later.
- Recycling the wet waste from our kitchens (e.g., vegetable and fruit peels etc.) – collecting it in large airy containers, mixing with dried leaves and

mud and then using as manure for our plants and trees. This not only ensures minimal garbage but also ensures a healthy and safe way for growing our fruit trees and vegetable plants without the use of harmful pesticides.

- Every little bit helps – taking cloth bags with us when we go to purchase vegetables and fruit avoids our use of plastic (plastics remain in nature for ages without degenerating; they release toxins and are harmful for all the orders in nature, including the human order).

These are just a few suggestions. Surely you will be able to think of many more ways in which you can be in harmony with nature and find that it also contributes to harmony in you (the Self) as well as harmony in the body.

For a more in depth exploration of nature and a better understanding of the four orders and the balance/harmony in nature, please refer to the book ‘A foundation course in human values and professional ethics’.

Test Your Understanding

1. Write how each of the other three orders in nature help keep the human being healthy

e.g., trees provide oxygen to breathe.

2. How are you and other members of your family and community contributing to maintaining health/ harmony in nature? Write down 5 ways in which you can do so and start implementing them e.g., planting trees, recycling kitchen wet waste etc. at the level of the community.

For each item on your list, mention how doing this activity also helps people in the community to stay healthy e.g., planting trees enriches nature and also the activity of doing labour helps keep the body healthy (further, the trees provide better air quality for all the residents in the neighbourhood).

3. Watch ‘An inconvenient truth’ – a documentary film by Al Gore on climate change. What conclusions do you make from this and what do you see as your role in this?

Chapter 32

Understanding the Harmony in Existence

What is existence? ^{14, 15, 16}

Existence is whatever exists – the sun, moon, stars, galaxies etc. and then there are roads, buildings, animals, trees, people, plants, mountains, oceans, birds etc. For want of a better term, all of these innumerable things can be termed units as we saw when we looked at nature. Besides these gross units whose form we are able to see, there are subtle units also whose form we may not be able to see but that we can appreciate when we pay attention to them e.g., air, water vapour etc.

What else is there in existence? There is space. The proposal is that there are two basic realities in existence –the units and the space. The units are immersed in space; they are submerged in space.

If we look at the essence of existence it is co-existence. The units exist in space. These two realities –the units and space – always co-exist, they cannot be separated from each other. Yet, these two realities have very different characteristics. Let us look at some of these characteristics –they will help us to understand these two realities better.

Characteristics of the Units and Space

Units are limited in size; Space is Unlimited

When we look around, we can see that all the units have a limited size – some are very small units (e.g., a chalk piece, a pin, a coin), some are larger in size (e.g., a black board, a building) and some are very large in size (e.g., the earth, the sun) but each and every unit has a definite shape and size –it is limited in size. We are able to appreciate that every unit has a boundary. Since we are able to see the boundary of each unit, we are able to count the units.

Space, on the other hand, is unlimited –it has no boundary. It is spread all around – it is all pervading. We cannot count it as this space and that space – it is all pervading –spread everywhere with no boundary at all.

Units are Active (they have activity); Space is not an Activity^{14, 15, 16}

All units have some or the other activity going on in them all the time and they themselves are also active. They interact with other units. So, if we take the example of a unit like the human body, many activities are taking place in the body –e.g., the activities of digestion, assimilation of food, circulation of blood etc. So the body is an activity. While these activities are going on within the body, the body itself can also be active e.g., walking, growing crops, cooking food etc. So not only is the body an activity, it is itself also active – it interacts with other units.

If we take the example of the Self, we can see that the activities of desiring, feeling, thinking, expecting are constantly going on within ourselves –so the Self is an activity. The Self also interacts with other units like the body (it interprets signals arising in the body and gives instructions to the body). It also interacts with other selves.

You might say that this is all very well but what about ‘inanimate’ objects like chairs, tables, rocks, a piece of metal etc.? Where is the activity in them? How are they active? At first, it may seem as if there is no activity in these objects but when we observe closely, we will be able to notice that slow and subtle changes keep happening in these objects too over time – chairs and tables may get worn out, rocks may get ‘weathered’ by constant interaction with air, water etc. and a piece of metal e.g. iron may rust with time. So activities are going on here too and these objects are interacting with other units as well.

Science has helped us to see that all objects are made up of molecules which further comprise atoms and atoms have sub-atomic particles that are active – the sub-atomic particles not only go around their own axis but also revolve around the nucleus of the atom. The atoms keep combining together to form molecules. So all these activities are taking place within such objects also!

Space, on the other hand, has no activity. It is not active. We said that the units are submerged in space.

Let us see what this means.

Understanding Submergence^{14, 15, 16}

When we say that the units are submerged in space we mean that the units are in space – space is inside the unit and around the unit. Wherever the unit is, space is also there. If we move the unit from one place to another, space is still there – no matter where a unit is moved, it is always in space. The two are in co-existence; they cannot be separated from one another.

There are three characteristics of this submergence and co-existence:

1. Units are energised in space
2. Units are self-organised in space
3. Units recognise their relationship with every other unit in space and fulfil that relationship

We will try and understand what these three statements mean.

Units are energised in space

Being submerged in space, the units are energised. For instance, the earth is a unit that has activity and is itself active –it rotates on its own axis and also revolves around the sun. From where is the Earth getting the energy for all this activity? It is energised being in co-existence in space. All the units from the largest to the smallest unit are energised being in space.

If we observe ourselves, we can see that we have the activities of desire, thought and expectation going on within us continuously, when the body is active and even when the body is not active. Where are we getting the energy for these activities to continuously go on in us? We find that we are energised in space.

Units are self-organised in space

Being in co-existence with space, each and every unit is self-organised; it is

in a definite order, thereby exhibiting a definite conduct –that is how we can identify, recognize and study the units.

Let us take the example of the body again. The body and all the parts of the body are self-organised. Each and every one of the trillions of cells in the body is self-organised. Each and every cell has a definite order, a definite conduct. We don't have to remember to take care of it and keep giving instructions to each and every cell for it to function – that is taking place by virtue of the self-organisation of the body, being in co-existence in space.

Units recognise their relationship and fulfill their relationship with every other unit in space

Every unit, being in co-existence with space, recognises its relationship with every other unit in space and fulfils that relationship. Each and every one of the trillions of cells in the body is in co-existence with space. Being in space,

- each cell is energised – many different types of activities are taking place in each and every cell.
- Each cell is self-organised – it is active in a well-defined manner and exhibiting a definite conduct.
- Each and every cell recognises its relationship with every other cell and fulfils that relationship – groups of cells together form tissues; tissues together form organs; organs form organ systems and ultimately all these work together for the larger good of the body as a whole.

If we look deeper, each cell is made up of molecules and each molecule is made up of atoms. All of these are submerged in space – being in space, they are energised, they are self-organised and recognising their relationship with every other atom and molecule. That is how the body acts in a definite manner.

The physical, the bio and the animal order are already self-organised by way of nature. Only the human order has to make effort and complete this process i.e., become self-organised. In the human being also, the body is already self-organised; it is only the Self that needs to make effort, become self-organised and have definite conduct.

Our Role/Participation

Our role is only to understand/recognise the co-existence in this existence and live in co-existence with every other unit in the existence.

With this understanding of our environment (family, society, nature and existence), we will be able to see that the pattern in the nature and existence is one of relationship, harmony and co-existence. We see a definiteness in conduct in nature and existence - that every unit in this nature and existence already has definite conduct (except for us human beings). We also have a natural acceptance for living with the feelings of relationship, harmony and co-existence. When we understand the pattern of existence and when we pay attention to our natural acceptance we can see our role in this existence - to live in co-existence with every other unit in existence, with definite conduct (i.e., with the feelings of relationship, harmony and co-existence).

In the next part of the book which is also the last part, we will look at some of the conclusions that can be drawn from whatever we have read so far and we will also take a look at our purpose as a human being.

Test Your Understanding

1. What is the pattern of the existence? What is missing?
2. What can you as a human being learn from the pattern of the existence?
3. What is your role in this existence?

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Part VIII

**Conclusions of a Holistic View of Health;
Purpose of a Healthy Body**

Chapter 33

Conclusions of a Holistic View of Health

We have seen how a holistic view of health in the human being includes not just the health of the body but, more importantly, the health of the Self and also the environment of which the human being is a part. To recap briefly -

Holistic Human Health

1. Mental health or health of the self
 - Understanding the human being
 - Understanding the self
 - harmony in the selfhealthy self (1)

2. Physical health or health of the body
 - Understanding the body
 - harmony in the bodyhealthy body (2)

3. Conditions for mental and physical health
i.e. health of the environment
 - Understanding the environment
 - harmony in the family
 - harmony in the society
 - harmony in the nature/existencehealthy environment (3)

The Self and the Body are two distinct realities with different needs, activities and responses.

The needs of the Self and the Body are fulfilled differently - while the needs of the Self are fulfilled by right understanding and right feeling within the Self, the needs of the Body are fulfilled by physio-chemical things.

The Self is central to human existence. It uses the body like a tool or instrument.

A healthy Self is one that has the right understanding and the right feeling –one in whom the imagination (i.e., the desires/feelings, thoughts and expectations) is in line (in harmony) with the natural acceptance at all times (every moment).

As a part of this right feeling, the healthy Self has the feeling of responsibility towards the body - to nurture, protect and rightly utilise the body and, with a feeling of self-regulation, makes a program to ensure the health of the body.

For the Self to fulfil its responsibility towards the body, physical facility is required in a limited quantity. A Self with the right understanding is able to rightly identify the need for physical facility and ensure the production and availability of more than required physical facility (the ‘more’ is for sharing; not for accumulation). The feeling of having more than required physical facility is the feeling of prosperity.

The body is a material unit that is self-organised (in harmony).

The role of the Self is merely to understand the harmony in the body and to aid it (or at least not interfere with it).

In order to keep the body in good health and to be happy (in harmony) in continuity, the Self not only has to understand itself and the body but also has to understand the harmony in the family, society, nature and existence i.e., the environment (of which it is a part).

When we understand the reality the way it is (i.e., we understand the Self, the body, the family, the society, the inherent harmony in nature and the existence), we also understand the universal principles of health which are based on the reality.

On understanding the principles of health, we are able to understand the recommendations for health and make a program to nurture, protect and rightly utilise the body such that it stays in harmony (health).

Based on the recommendations for health, when we implement the program for maintaining health in the body, we have an intake that nurtures the body, we have a daily routine in synchronisation with the day-night, lunar

and seasonal rhythms in nature, incorporate labour and exercise and take the help of body postures and breath regulation to keep the body healthy. We find that there is not much else we need to do to maintain health in the body. Ensuring all this in our routine and using home remedies as needed, the body remains in harmony. Should there be any occasional disharmony despite this, we can then take the help of medicine. Of course treatment with surgery and the use of external instruments, machines and drugs to run a body function should be looked at only as a last resort.

With the understanding of all of the above and implementation of a program for health like the one mentioned, it becomes easy to maintain the health at the individual level. With that we can also have health and harmony in the family, in society and help to maintain the harmony in nature – of which we are a part and it is only then that we can truly have health in totality.

Further, we can also see that there is already an innate harmony in this existence. We don't need to create harmony, we just need to understand this innate harmony in existence and be with it (align with it). That is our role – our participation – in this existence.

Appraisal of Current Health System and Benefits of a Holistic View

If we look at the model of the system of health we have today, we find that there have been many advances e.g., in the sphere of infectious diseases we have seen a tremendous decline in incidence (the recent 'corona' pandemic is an exception). Not only has there been a decline in the incidence of infectious diseases but also an overall decline in mortality, with longer lifespans. We also have many newer, improved methods of detecting and diagnosing diseases with improved laboratory tests, more sophisticated nuclear imaging etc.

While the current health system has seen the above and many more such advances, it could benefit from a holistic view of health which can provide a shift in paradigm - new insights, a different perspective – in the following ways:

1. The current system has a focus on disease, its detection and treatment; the focus can now be 'health' and its maintenance.
2. Despite a focus on disease, today there are many chronic diseases for which we have no cure and 'manage' these diseases for life, with life-long use of medication (e.g., in the case of diseases like diabetes, hypertension etc.).

The proposal is for understanding the health (harmony) in the body and maintaining it (at least not disturbing it) and thus preventing disharmony (disease) in the body and if and when there is disharmony, correcting it with the program for health (correcting the intake and lifestyle and doing labour, exercise, taking the help of postures and breath regulation).

With such a program, not only is the health of the body maintained and disease prevented but, even in presence of disease, it is often possible to reverse many chronic diseases without the use of medication and treatment. Of course, should there still be occasional disharmony in the body medication can be used as and when needed.

Ultimately, we can work towards harmony in the Self (with right understanding). When the Self is in harmony, it does not disrupt the innate harmony of the body thus eradicating disease from the root.

3. Today, the body is at the centre of health care; hence the solution to health problems is sought in the body, even for issues related to mental health (like depression, paranoia, sleeplessness etc.) and medication is given to the body. The Self is largely not being taken into consideration.

If we see that it is the Self that is central to human existence, we will also be able to see that the body is merely a tool of the Self. Besides, the body is already naturally in harmony to begin with; it is often the Self that goes into disharmony, causing disruption of the harmony in the body i.e., ill-health/ disease. Therefore, the focus needs to shift to the Self, maintaining harmony in the Self and with that, the Self maintaining harmony with the body with a feeling of responsibility towards the body (thus correcting disharmony in the Self itself, often even before it translates to disharmony or disease in the body). That would be true primary prevention of disease.

4. Currently, we tend to look at health in more or less an isolated manner – it needs a holistic view (that the health of the human being is inter-connected to and inter-dependent on the health of every level that the human being lives in – the family, society, nature and existence). Unless we understand the environment in totality i.e., the harmony (health) at all these levels of our being and unless we live in harmony at all these levels, the health of the human being cannot be ensured in completeness.
5. When individual human beings do not take responsibility for their health, they become dependent on doctors, hospitals, insurance companies and pharmacies for their health and when all of these stand to gain from ill-health and disease in the individual rather than from health (higher remuneration for health professionals from medication and treatment of disease rather than its prevention) coupled with the goal in society at large being assumed to be that of profit maximisation, three things are likely to happen—
 - The cost of healthcare/medical care goes up
 - Focus shifts further from health and towards disease, its detection and treatment
 - The health profession is regarded as a business (rather than one in which concern for the health of the individual with a feeling of relationship is primary)

We can ask ourselves - which direction do we want health care to go in and which direction is it taking today?

What is proposed is

- a feeling of self-regulation in every individual – individuals need no longer be in victim mode; need no longer be totally dependent on health professionals for their health (this means a shift in focus from disease to health, less burden on the healthcare system and health at a fraction of the current cost).

For the feeling of self-regulation, the Self needs to have the right understanding. With the right understanding, we understand our

relationship with all and have a feeling of relationship for all. This shifts the focus from ‘taking’/seeking to gain from the other/exploiting the other to a feeling of concern for the other/‘giving’ to the other/nurturing the other.

Which of the two is naturally acceptable to us?

6. With specialisation and super-specialisation of health professionals in specific fields and treatment modalities that are often extremely expensive, healthcare today has become unaffordable and out of the reach of many. Health insurance policies that claim to be a solution are also in the business of making profit and not a true solution; besides, the expense of health insurance policies is also out of the reach of many. Thus the current health system does not cater to health for all but rather treats disease for the select few who can afford it. Such a system is neither financially viable nor sustainable.

The proposed model of healthcare would need less infrastructure (hospitals, labs and testing equipment), less requirement for medical and nursing education, as also, less use of human resources (less numbers of doctors, nurses, hospital technicians, staff etc., not to mention the added benefit of less time and effort spent).

Thus, with the proposed model, health for all at a fraction of the current costs can potentially be a reality and a sustainable solution for a goal of health for all.

Test Your Understanding

1. What was your earlier perspective about health and about the human being?
2. Has there been a change in your perspective? If so, what is your perspective now?
3. What are the conclusions you could draw after going through this book? What are three things that strike you as most important for your own health? Start implementing them in your living.

Chapter 34

Purpose of A Healthy Body

Today we are making so much effort to keep the body healthy – we try to eat right, exercise, we do laboratory tests at clinics from time to time, check on our blood parameters etc....but with all of this, we are not able to ensure good health; in fact, we even plan, financially, for sickness and hospitalisation.

We may have been able to see by now that with a holistic perspective and a program for health like the one mentioned earlier, it is possible for us to ensure our health. So once we ensure health in the body, what then...? What is the purpose of attaining a healthy body? Is a healthy body just so that we can indulge in the sensations that we find pleasant and seek to get pleasure through the body? Is that why we strive so hard for a healthy body? Do we keep the body healthy just so that we can get a high paying job, earn and accumulate a lot of wealth or is there some higher purpose to achieving health in the body?

Now that we have seen that it is the Self that is central to our existence; it is the Self that is the decision maker, the one instructing the body to do its bidding, we can also see that the body is merely a tool for the Self. So the purpose of the body is to aid the purpose of the Self. Maintaining health in the body is a means to this end and not the end in itself.

And what is the purpose of the Self?

The purpose of the Self is to understand (realise) the inherent relationship, harmony and co-existence in this existence and play its part in it (i.e., participate in this harmony/live in harmony as a human being - in co-existence with every other unit in existence). This ensures a healthy (happy) Self – the feeling of prosperity and the health of the body are then natural outcomes of this.

The purpose of the human being is thus to understand the harmony at all the levels of its existence (at the individual level, in the family, in society

and in nature and existence), to have the feeling and thought of harmony within and to live in harmony with all (with harmonious behaviour, work and participation).

This state is authenticated by a feeling of love (feeling of being related to all) and the feeling of compassion (feeling of being responsible towards all) – these feelings are continuous and unconditional and contribute to the happiness, health and prosperity of all.

Practical Exercise for Maintaining Harmony Within

In order to understand the harmony at all the levels of your being, you need to start with ensuring the harmony within yourself first. Wake up early in the morning. Take time out (~ 15-20 minutes) in the early am to sit quietly and observe your imagination (the feelings, thoughts and expectations going on within you continuously). Observe the imagination without reacting to it (without trying to change or stop it). Initially you may not be able to observe anything or perhaps just a few thoughts but stay with the process - continue with the effort daily.

Once you are able to witness your thoughts, try and observe the feeling at the base of the thoughts without reacting to it. Evaluate the feeling – do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with the feeling? You will notice that whenever your feeling is in line with your natural acceptance, you feel comfortable within; whenever it is not in line with your natural acceptance, you are uncomfortable inside. Try to have a feeling that is in line with your natural acceptance all the time (what is naturally acceptable to you is the feeling of relationship, the feeling of harmony and the feeling of co-existence).

Observe how you feel within at the moments when you have a feeling in line with your natural acceptance - you are comfortable within; you are in harmony within. As you have more and more moments when your feeling is in line with your natural acceptance, you will notice that you are becoming calmer, you are comfortable within (i.e., you are happy) at more moments and gradually, you may also notice that the health of the body starts improving as a natural consequence.

Test Your Understanding

1. The role of the Self is to take responsibility for the body with a feeling of self-regulation. Are you taking responsibility for the body? Have you made a program for maintaining the health of the body and are you implementing it regularly?
2. What do you see as your role/participation in the holistic view of health?
3. Make a program/plan to live in harmony at all the levels – as an individual (being in harmony within), in the family and society (participating in the harmony of the family and the society) and in nature and existence (nature and existence are already in harmony – your participation is required to not disturb their inherent harmony).

Start by ensuring the harmony within yourself by waking up early every morning, sitting quietly by yourself, observing your imagination for ~ 15-20 minutes daily and evaluating the feeling that you have. Observe the imagination without reacting to it (without trying to change or stop it).

Evaluate the feeling and bring it in line with your natural acceptance. When you have a feeling in line with your natural acceptance – you are comfortable within/in harmony within; you are happy. Try to have the feelings of relationship, harmony and co-existence all the time– when you are by yourself in the morning, in your interaction with friends and colleagues during the day, when you are with your family, in the evening – all the time; every moment.

As you continue this process, over time do you also observe any change in the health of your body? If so, note down your observations.

Appendix A

Holistic Human Health Course - Level 1 ***(Typical Course Structure)***

About this course:

This course has been designed as a foundation course (may be conducted as a 3-4 credit course) to augment the regular full length courses that are currently being conducted in education. The course comprises 28 lectures and 14 practice sessions that may be run as 2 Lectures and 1 Practice session per week in the first semester/ year/ professional.

The focus of the course is on understanding health holistically - in its totality and being healthy on the basis of this. It thus includes an understanding of health (harmony) at all the levels of living - as an individual human being, at the level of the family, society, nature and existence. The course thus provides the student with a well-rounded and holistic perspective on health fulfilling the core aspiration of the present healthcare system.

The holistic health course articulates universal health principles which are based on an understanding of the reality. The principles are universal; they are invariant, logical, rational and leading to harmony universally, for all. The course further presents guidelines for health which emerge from the basic principles. While the principles are universal, the guidelines vary, taking into account the various differences among human beings on the basis of body type, age, gender etc. and variations in the body resulting from diurnal and seasonal changes in the environment.

Implementation of the principles and guidelines in the form of a complete program on how to stay healthy with the provision of a health tracker to track one's progress in health have been included in the course. These will empower each and every human being to take personal responsibility for his/her own health and be of service to family and society.

This of course has wide and far reaching implications for the healthcare system in society. Not only does it provide a means of affordable health for all, but it also helps incorporate values in the individual such that the values then guide the skills that students learn in their respective institutions.

The expected outcome from this course is for the student/participant to get a broad and holistic perspective on health based on the human being's interconnectedness with the environment as is visible and evident in the reality/nature. It also expects for students to be able to understand values and live by them; to take responsibility for their own health and to be able to see their participation in the larger whole.

Course Syllabus

The course consists of 28 lectures and 14 practice sessions organised in 5 Modules as follows –

Module I: Introduction to Holistic Human Health and Health of the Self

Module II: Health of the Body – I

Module III: Health of the Body - II

Module IV: Health of the Environment

Module V: The purpose of a healthy body

The 28 lectures and 14 practice sessions may be conducted as given below

Module 1: Introduction to Holistic Human Health and Health in the Self

This module discusses the current perspective on health and the necessity for a more holistic outlook. It draws attention to the reality of the human being (as the Self and the Body) and therefore the need to address the health of both – Health of the Self and Health of the Body. Further, it also draws attention to the impact of the environment on the health of the human being and therefore the need to understand and include the health (harmony) of the environment when considering health in the human being.

The universal health principles that are derived from an understanding of the reality have been explained very clearly and in depth in this module. These universal health principles have been elaborated on separately for both distinct entities that comprise the human being i.e. Principles relating to the Body and Principles relating to the Self and its interaction with the Body.

Specific guidelines for health are drawn from the basic universal health principles (the why and what to do in order to stay healthy). While the principles are universal, the guidelines take into account the differences in human beings at the level of their physical body, their thoughts and emotions and the changing environment (change of seasons, residence etc.).

With this background, the module then elaborates on Health in the Self and how this is fundamental for ensuring the health of the Body. A health tracker is introduced as a means of tracking one's health and progress in these domains.

Learnings of this as well as all the other modules are put forward in the form of proposals that can be verified in a logical way with reasoning, self-exploration and experimentation rather than in the form of dos and don'ts.

The expected outcome from this module is a thorough understanding of the two realities that constitute the human being (the Self and the Body), to understand the universal health principles, the logic and rationality behind them and to be able to see how the guidelines for health have been drawn from the understanding of the health principles as the foundation – ultimately, to see the significance of these in understanding health (harmony) in the human being.

Lectures for Module I:

Lecture 1. Introduction to the Course

Lecture 2. Understanding the Human Being holistically as a co-existence of the Self and the Body

Health in the Self

Lecture 3: Universal Health Principles

Principles relating to the Body

Lecture 4: Universal health principles relating to the Self and its interaction with the Body

Lecture 5: Specific Recommendations for health – based on the principles

Lecture 6: Details of the Specific recommendations

Practice sessions for module I:

1. Observing the Self by the Self – observing the imagination going on within the Self
2. Observing the interaction between Self and body. Observing the decision maker between the Self and the Body
Introduction to the Health Tracker
3. Observing the response in the Self (choice - based on assuming/ knowing) and the response in the Body (no choice - fixed/definite)

Module II: Health in the Body – I

This module helps the student to understand the human constitution and the different forms of the human body. It draws attention to the different types of constitutions, how to understand one's own constitution and the significance of knowing this in order to understand the guidelines for health.

While module I elaborates on the Health of the Self, this and the next module have been dedicated to the Health of the Body. Module II throws light on the various processes and practices that can be undertaken to ensure the health of the body, particularly detailing out the significance of one's intake which includes the intake of food, water, air, sunlight and in fact all intake through the five sense organs of the Body.

Lectures for Module II:

Lecture 7. Understanding the Human Body and Human Constitution

Lecture 8. Practices and Processes for keeping the body healthy

Lecture 9. Becoming aware of one's Intake – The Intake of Food –I

Lecture 10. The Intake of Food –II

Synchronising meals and activities with natural rhythms

Lecture 11. The Intake of Water

Lecture 12. The Intake of Air, Sunlight etc.

Practice sessions for Module II:

4. Answering the questionnaire – Are you healthy?

Identifying one's constitution with the help of the given questionnaire. Is your constitution in balance or imbalance?

Using the Health Tracker to track health

5. Making a daily chart of food intake that is nurturing for the body

6. Regulating all intake through the sense organs of the body

Module III: Health in the Body – II

As a continuation of the discussion on the health of the Body that started in Module II, this module elaborates further on the practices and processes that help to keep the body healthy – having a daily and seasonal routine that is in synchronisation with the natural rhythms, the significance of labour and exercise, body postures, breath regulation and an understanding of common herbs and spices available in one's own kitchen or backyard – how all these can be used to keep the body in harmony. An understanding of these will help the individual to take charge of his/her own health.

This module also includes a discussion of the early indicators of disharmony that can help to detect disharmony in the body, how to correct the disharmony and when to seek help.

Lectures for Module III:

Lecture 13. Daily Routine in line with harmony in Nature

Lecture 14. Early Rising, Observing the Body, Early morning cleansing of the Bowels

Lecture 15. The significance of good sleep

Lecture 16. Labour and Exercise as part of the daily routine

Lecture 17. Body postures for keeping the body in harmony, Regulation of Breath Patterns

Lecture 18. Being in synchronisation with the seasonal rhythms

Lecture 19. Attending to body signals

Lecture 20. Home Remedies to Correct Disharmony in the body and bring it back into Harmony.

Role of Medication and Treatment – When to see the Doctor

Practice sessions for module III:

7. Maintaining a daily routine in synchronisation with the rhythmic cycles in nature

Incorporating the various daily Cleansing processes

8. Incorporating labour and exercise in the daily routine

9. Incorporating yogic postures in the daily routine e.g. sun salutation; vajrasana and their significance.

Being in synchronisation with the seasonal rhythm

10. Making use of the various herbs and spices available in one's kitchen / backyard for curing minor ailments.

Module IV: Health of the Environment

The fourth module emphasises the importance of seeing the human being as an integral part of the larger whole. This larger framework includes all that the human being is interconnected with and interdependent on i.e. the environment of the human being. This includes relationships within the family, the society and all of nature/ existence.

It also briefly touches on implementation of health guidelines at levels beyond those of the individual i.e. implementation at the level of family and society. The module helps the student to understand the harmony at all

these levels, the importance of living in harmony at all these levels and the impact of the environment (family, society and nature) on the health of the human being.

Lectures for Module IV:

- Lecture 21. Impact of the environment (family, society and nature) on the health of the human Being
- Lecture 22. Understanding harmony in the family –feelings in relationships
- Lecture 23. Understanding harmony in Society (trust/fearlessness in society)
- Lecture 24. Understanding harmony in Nature (innate harmony versus struggle for survival) and Understanding Existence as co-existence

Practice sessions for module IV:

- 11. Participating in the health of the family (practically charting a program for health in the entire family and identifying, making a list of household remedies and using them for minor ailments in family members)
- 12. Working with nature using cyclic processes that maintain the harmony in nature

Module V: The Purpose of a healthy body

This last module is dedicated to providing an understanding of the purpose or goal of the human being and looks at health in the body as a means of attaining this higher purpose rather than assuming health in the body to be the goal in itself.

It takes a look at the current health system along with suggestions for a more holistic approach with the well-being of all as its focal point. The module ends with a final sum-up of the course learnings and a look at the way forward.

Lectures for Module V:

- Lecture 25. The holistic perspective on Health
Purpose of a healthy body

Lecture 26. Appraisal of the current health system and vision for a holistic approach towards the well-being of all..

Lecture 27. Sum - up of Course learnings - I

Lecture 28. Sum -up of Course learnings - II and the way forward.

Practice sessions for Module V:

13. Designing a health system for society that contributes to harmony at every level

14. Observing what contributes to harmony within the Self (feeling of relationship, harmony and co-existence)

Working for a healthy Self (transformation within), a healthy body and participating in the larger order for the well-being of all

Appendix B

Body Constitution and Diet

One way to overcome some of the tendencies you have as a result of your constitution is to modify your diet accordingly.

The table given below shows the different constitutions and the qualities of food substances that are suitable to the specific constitutions.

Body Constitution	Qualities of food substances that are suitable
A/Air- Space (Vata)	Sweet, sour or salty foods (unctuous and hot)
B/Fire - Water (Pitta)	Sweet, bitter or astringent foods (these are cold in nature)
C/Earth- Water (Kapha)	Bitter, pungent or astringent foods (these are light, un-unctuous, dry and hot in nature)

If you consume food according to your constitution i.e., if you consume food that is suitable to your constitution, you can have good health in the body without too much effort.

An example of various foods and their effects on the various constitutions is given in the next table. With the help of this table you can decide what foods are best for you to consume on a regular basis (based on your specific constitution) so as to keep your body healthy.

Table showing various foods and their effects on specific constitutions

(+ enhancing; - decreasing the constitutional effect)

Food substances	Vata	Pitta	Kapha
Grains			
Barley	-	+	+
Corn	-	+	+
Millet	-	-	+
Rice	+	+	+
Wheat	+	+	-

Food substances	Vata	Pitta	Kapha
Pulses			
Black gram	+	-	-
Chinese bean/cows peas	-	+	+
Green gram	+	+	+
Horse gram	-	+	+
Lentil	-	+	+
Peas	-	+	+
Pink beans	-	+	+
Red gram/pigeon peas	-	+	+
Soybeans	+	+	-
Vegetables			
Bitter gourd	-	+	+
Brinjal	+	-	+
Cabbage	-	+	-
Drum stick	+	+	+
Elephant's foot (Jimikand)	+	-	+
Garlic	+	-	+
Indian bean/Hyacinth beans	+	+	-
Onion	+	-	-
Ash gourd	+	+	+
Radish	+	-	+
Sweet potato	-	+	-
White gourd	-	+	-
Spices			
Asafoetida	+	-	+
Black Pepper	+	-	+
Cardamom	-	-	+
Clove	-	+	+
Coriander	+	+	+
Cumin seed	+	-	+
Fenugreek	+	-	+
Ginger	+	-	+
Mustard	+	-	+
Turmeric	+	+	+

Food substances	Vata	Pitta	Kapha
Fruits			
Banana	+	+	–
Coconut	+	+	–
Dates	+	+	–
Grapes	+	+	+
Guava	–	+	–
Indian gooseberry	+	+	+
Jack fruit	+	+	–
Lemon	+	–	+
Mango (Raw)	–	–	+
Mango (Ripe)	+	+	–
Papaya	+	–	–
Pomegranate	+	+	+
Oils			
Coconut oil	+	+	–
Linseed oil	+	–	+
Rape seed oil/Indian mustard oil	+	–	+
White mustard oil	+	–	–

Glossary

Many of the words used in this book may be familiar to you while others may be new for you. Even among the words familiar to you, certain words used here may have a meaning that is specific and different from the meaning of the word familiar to you. For convenience and to help ease understanding of the text better, three types of words and their meanings have been listed alphabetically in this glossary – medical terms, Sanskrit or Hindi words and terms relating to Universal Human Values.

Word	Meaning
A2 Cow's Milk	Milk produced by cows with purely the A2 gene e.g., indigenous breeds like the pure Indian gir, sahiwal and other breeds, the Swiss brown breed etc. Consumption of this milk is considered beneficial for the body (as opposed to breeds like the Jersey cow which do not yield pure A2 milk).
Aata	Whole wheat flour (more processed and more fine than Dalia but coarser and less processed than maida)
Activity	Actions or changes taking place in a unit over time. Units are self-energised, self-organised activity in space, they are active (interacting with other units in accordance with their natural characteristic). Activities can be: physical-activity, chemical-activity and consciousness-activity.
Activity Completeness	Refers to the Self which is awakened to all of its activities.
Adrak	Ginger
Ajwain	Carom seeds
Allergic Rhinitis	An allergic response in the body with cold-like symptoms of sneezing, itching, running or blocked nose.
Allergy	Considered to be a reaction by the immune system of the body to something that does not bother most other people. Since the body's recognition and fulfillment is definite, a more complete understanding of the body and living accordingly may help get rid of allergies.
Alzheimer Disease	A progressive neurologic disease that affects memory, thinking and behavior, often seriously enough to disrupt a person's normal day to day activities- being seen increasingly in older people.
Amla	Indian gooseberry
Amylase	A digestive enzyme (a type of protein) that helps to digest food, breaking down complex carbohydrates into simple sugars. Amylase is secreted by the salivary glands in the mouth (thus the process of digestion starts in the mouth itself) and also by the pancreas in the abdomen.

Word	Meaning
Anaar/Dadima	Pomegranate
Anaemia	A condition in which the red blood cells in the body or the haemoglobin in them is lower than normal. It leads to tiredness, shortness of breath, lack of energy and poor concentration. A common preventable cause is lack of iron in the diet.
Animal Consciousness	A human being, assuming itself to be the Body, trying to fulfil all its needs solely on the basis of physical facility (and not working for right understanding and fulfilment in relationship).
Anloma-viloma	A breath regulation exercise also referred to as alternate nostril breathing
Anti-carcinogenic	A substance that inhibits the development of cancer.
Anti-inflammatory Drug	A medication that reduces the symptoms of pain, fever and swelling in any part of the body. Although it reduces the symptoms, it may do nothing to treat the root cause of the disease process.
Anti-oxidants	Compounds that prevent oxidation reactions in the body that lead to the formation of free radicals. These free radicals are harmful for the body (thus anti-oxidants are beneficial for the body).
Antiseptic	A substance that is used to kill or slow down the growth of bacteria; it is often applied to the skin to clean it and prevent infection.
Anxiety Disorder	Prolonged anxiety in the mind, severe enough to disrupt normal day-to-day living, often also leading to disharmony in the body.
Apnoea	A potentially serious condition with temporary stopping and restarting of breathing especially when sleeping.
Assuming	Acceptance of oneself and the other. There are two possibilities: Assuming on the basis of knowing – The acceptance is definite. I am a human being; the other is similar to me; and I have a feeling of mutual fulfilment in that relationship. Assuming without knowing – The acceptance is indefinite, based on preconditioning or sensation; my feeling in that relationship is conditional.
Asthma	A chronic (long-term) disease characterised by narrowing of the air passages along with swelling and increased mucous formation in them. It leads to breathing difficulty causing cough, tightness in the chest and wheezing (a whistling type of sound).
Behavior	Interaction of one human being with another human being. The primary interaction is in the form of exchange of feelings.
Biryani	A rice dish mixed with a variety of vegetables and cooked with various spices.
BMI (Body Mass Index)	Widely used as an indicator of whether one has a healthy body weight in relation to one's height. Calculation - Weight (in kilograms) divided by height ² (in meters)
Body	The material unit in co-existence with the Self (the conscious unit).

Word	Meaning
Brain fog	A term referring to symptoms of confusion and inability to think clearly that may be associated with any of several conditions (as an example -when one is sleep deprived)
Bronchitis	An inflammation in the bronchial tubes (the airways that carry air to and from the lungs) causing cough, thick mucus and shortness of breath.
Cardiovascular Disease	Disorders pertaining to the heart and blood vessels that are largely lifestyle related and are the leading cause of death world-wide.
Chandan	Sandalwood
Character	Behaviour, work and participation in the larger order by a human being.
Chhoti Elaichi	Green cardamom (small)
Cholera	A bacterial infectious disease leading to diarrhea and dehydration. Since it is transmitted through water or food contaminated by faeces, it is a communicable disease (though, with modern sewage and water treatment plants, the disease is now rare)
Circadian Rhythm	A normal rhythmic or cyclic process in the body that responds to the day-night cycle (change in light in the environment) by secretion of the sleep hormone melatonin when it is dark, leading to cycles of alertness in the day and sleepiness in the night. This keeps happening every 24 hours by virtue of the body's own self-organisation.
Cluttered Mind	A mind with many random and unorganised thoughts
Co-existence	Interconnected, interrelated units submerged in space.
Cognitive	Relating to cognition – the process of learning through thought and the experience of the outside through the senses of the body.
Communicable Diseases	Diseases that spread from one person to another; most often caused by infectious organisms e.g., viruses (like the corona virus)
Conduct	The complete living of a human being, including understanding, thought and its expression in behaviour, work and participation in the larger order.
Conduct Completeness	The conduct of a human being awakened in all activities of Self (including contemplation, understanding and realisation) and expressing it in behaviour, work and participation in the larger order.
Consciousness	Units that have the activity of knowing, assuming, recognising and fulfilling. The activity of assuming is awakened, but the activity of knowing may or may not be awakened or active.
Consciousness Development	Self-evolution, awakening to the higher potential in the Self from living on the basis of assuming without knowing to living with assuming on the basis of knowing. It can also be seen as the transformation from animal consciousness to human consciousness.

Word	Meaning
Constipation	Generally refers to three or fewer bowel movements a week often with stools that are hard, dry and painful to pass.
Convulsion	A sudden uncontrollable movement of the muscles of the body (sometimes referred to as 'fits') associated with brain disorders or commonly with fever in children.
Cornea	The clear or transparent layer in the front of the eye
Cribriform Plate	A sieve-like plate or structure that forms the roof of the nasal cavity. The olfactory nerves (pertaining to the sense of smell) travel from the nose through this plate to the brain. Thus this sieve-like plate connects the nose with the brain.
Crohn's Disease	Considered to be a lifestyle disorder with inflammation usually in the small and large intestines; thought to be due to a decrease in diversity of good bacteria in the intestine due to an improper intake of food, lack of exercise etc. and often leading to severe, frequent loose stools, abdominal pain and weight loss
CT (Computerised Tomography) scan	A medical diagnostic test that takes X-ray images of a particular part of the body from various angles and uses computer processing to see the part as cross-sectional images (slices)
Cyclic and Mutually Enriching	A process in which the participating units convert from one state/ form to another and in the process every participating unit is enriched.
Dalchini	Cinnamon
Daliya/Dalia	'Cracked' or 'broken' wheat – a coarse, minimally processed form of wheat
Definite Human Conduct	The conduct of a human being living with human consciousness. The dimension of thought, behaviour, work and participation in the larger order is guided by relationship, harmony and co-existence, for which they have natural acceptance.
Degenerative Disease	A disease in which specific tissues deteriorate gradually and eventually lose their functional ability almost totally e.g., Alzheimer's disease
Dengue	Dengue is an infection caused by a virus. You can get it if an infected mosquito bites you. Dengue does not spread from person to person. Symptoms include a high fever, headaches, joint and muscle pain, vomiting, and a rash.
Depression	A state of prolonged under evaluation of oneself leading to despair, hopelessness, unhappiness and a loss of interest in life
Detoxification	The process of removal of toxins (harmful substances) from the body
Dhania	Coriander
Dhatura	A poisonous flowering plant of the Solanaceae family; botanical name- Datura metel

Word	Meaning
Diabetes Mellitus (most common - Type 2)	A chronic lifestyle disease (associated with the way a person lives) in which the body does not produce enough insulin hormone or is unable to use the insulin it produces, leading to uncontrolled levels of sugar in the blood. Over time, it leads to damage to the heart, blood vessels, eyes, kidneys and nerves.
Diarrhoea	Diarrhea is loose, watery stools (bowel movements). You have diarrhea if you have loose stools three or more times in one day.
Digestion	The process by which food consumed by the body is converted into nutrients used to provide energy to the body and the formation of waste matter which is to be eliminated.
DNA (Deoxyribonucleic Acid)	A chemical present in every cell of the body; it controls the structure and purpose of each cell and carries genetic information that is passed down from parents to their children.
Dysmenorrhea	Painful menstrual periods (with abdominal pain and cramps)
Eczema/Dermatitis	A common term denoting inflammation of the skin associated with dryness and itching or sometimes even blisters/bleeding.
Enslaved	Any of the following: Physically constrained at the level of body Having disharmonious expectations Having contradictory thoughts Having desires that are not in line with co-existence
Enslavement	Dictated by the other or by one's own disharmonious expectations, thoughts or desires.
Enzyme	A type of protein that helps speed up chemical reactions in the cells of the body without itself undergoing any change.
Erratic Breathing	Breathing that is irregular – not in the normal rhythm
Ethical	In accordance with ethics (defined below).
Ethical Conduct	Conduct conforming to ethics (defined below).
Ethical Human Conduct	The participation of a human being with the world outside which is guided by right understanding and right feeling – which is in accordance with ethics (defined below).
Ethics	Ethics is the basic codes/principles in the expression (behaviour, work and participation in the larger order) of definite human conduct.
Existence	All that is/is to be.
Experiential validation	Verification in living – either in behaviour with human being or in work with rest of nature.
Facial nerve	A cranial nerve that is associated with facial movement and expression and which carries sensations from various areas of the head and neck.
Family	Group of individuals having a feeling of acceptance for each other, living in relationship of mutual fulfilment.
Fearlessness	Mutual trust and complementariness.

Word	Meaning
Fever	A body temperature that is higher than normal (normal body temperature being about 98.6 °F/37 °C). A fever is a sign of an underlying disharmony in the body.
Fissure (Anal)	A small split or tear in the thin tissue lining the anus (the lower end of the gastro- intestinal tract) causing pain and bleeding when passing motion. It is often associated with the passing of hard stools.
Flatulence	Accumulation of gas/wind in the stomach and bowels
Fulfilling	That which is filling the need of the given unit.
Gingivitis	Inflammation of the gums.
Goal	Destination. What we want to be and continue to be. We want to be happy and continue to be happy.
Haemorrhoids (Piles)	A condition of swelling of veins in the anus and rectum usually causing discomfort, pain and bleeding
Haldi	Turmeric
Happiness	To be in a state of harmony.
Harmony	Synergy, consonance.
Health (Body)	(1) The Body acts according to the Self. (2) There is harmony between the parts of the Body.
Heartburn	A burning sensation in the chest, often as a result of eating a spicy meal, overeating etc.
Hereditary Diseases	Diseases that tend to be passed down from parents to their children
Hing	Asafoetida
Holistic	Dealing with the whole and not just a part
Homeostasis	An internally steady state with the maintenance of physical and chemical equilibrium (balance)
Hormone	A specific chemical made by specific cells in the ‘endocrine/ hormonal glands’ of the body and then sent, via the blood, to distant organs in the body to regulate their behavior
Hot Flashes	Sudden uncomfortable sensation of heat over the face, neck and chest with profuse sweating (experienced by some women during menopause)
Human Being	The co-existence of the Self and a human body.
Human Consciousness	A human being, knowing itself to be the co-existence of the Self and the Body, making effort to fulfil the needs of the Self by Right Understanding and Right Feeling; and the needs of the Body by Physical facility. A human being living with justice in relationship, harmony and co-existence (mutual fulfilment) with perseverance.

Word	Meaning
Human Constitution	Represents the typical body structure, physiology and mental tendencies of an individual that are genetically determined but also influenced by environmental factors. It is useful in determining the ailments an individual is most susceptible to as well as to choose the intake and lifestyle most suitable for an individual.
Human Goal	Right understanding and right feeling (happiness), prosperity, fearlessness (trust), and co-existence (mutual fulfilment).
Human Values	Natural Participation of human being at all levels of existence- such as Perseverance, Bravery, Generosity, Kindness, Beneficence, Compassion
Humane Conduct	The conduct of a human being in accordance with its natural characteristic.
Humane Society	A society in which the human goal is fulfilled generation after generation.
Humane Tradition	Human beings living with fulfilment of comprehensive human goal. Humane conduct, education, constitution and universal human order, its continuity.
Hydrotherapy	The external or internal therapeutic application of water on the body in any of its forms (water, ice, steam). It is one of the modalities used in the naturopathic system for the promotion of health or treatment of various diseases and is widely prevalent in ancient cultures including those of India, Egypt and China.
Hypertension or High blood pressure (BP)	A condition (often associated with an unhealthy lifestyle) in which the blood flowing in the arteries pushes against the walls of the arteries with an abnormally high force. Normal adult blood pressure is considered to be about 120/80 mmHg. Hypertension or high blood pressure is defined as a blood pressure above 140/90 mmHg
IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome)	A common disorder affecting the large intestine, it may cause abdominal pain, cramps, bloating and constipation/diarrhea or both. A substantial improvement in symptoms can be brought about by diet, exercise and other lifestyle changes.
Immunity	Part of the body's self-organisation that helps it to recognise organisms that may cause it harm and to protect itself from them (while also recognising those organisms that are beneficial to it and responding to them in a different way -an example of definite recognition and fulfilment (provided the Self does not disrupt this process e.g., by improper intake, routine not in synchronisation with nature etc.).
Infant	A child from zero to one year of age
Innateness	The harmonious self-organisation of a unit, that which is inseparable from the unit.
Insomnia	Having trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or both.

Word	Meaning
Interconnectedness	Being together and being related to each other.
Interdependence	Being interrelated and fulfilling the needs of each other.
Jaundice	Jaundice causes your skin and the whites of your eyes to turn yellow. Too much bilirubin causes jaundice. Bilirubin is a yellow chemical in hemoglobin, the substance that carries oxygen in your red blood cells.
Jayphal	Nutmeg
Jeera	Cumin seed
Junk food	Generally refers to food that has plenty of calories but hardly any nutritional value. Since such food lacks vitamins, minerals and other nutrients and since it is often high in calories, salt, sugar and saturated or trans-fats, junk food is extremely unhealthy – hence the name.
Karela	Bitter gourd
Khichdi/Khichri	Traditionally a dish made of rice and lentils/pulses/dals (often using split ‘moong’ or green gram dal). There may also be several variations like with the addition of millets, vegetables etc.
Knowing	Seeing the reality directly, as it is, in completeness.
Knowledge	The right understanding of reality. Seeing the reality as it is, in its completeness. Knowledge of Self, knowledge of existence and knowledge of humane conduct.
Larger Order	The system of which a unit is a part, is the larger order for that unit.
Laung/Lavang	Clove
Muhurta	A unit of measurement of time that equates to 48 minutes
Maida	White flour – a highly processed and refined form of wheat
Malaria	Malaria is a serious disease caused by a parasite. You get it when an infected mosquito bites you. Malaria symptoms include chills, flu-like symptoms, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, and jaundice. A blood test can diagnose it.
Masala	A varying blend of Indian spices used in cooking.
Material	Units characterised by ‘recognising and fulfilling’ (which do not have the activity of assuming or knowing). Its needs and activities are temporary in nature.
Mediastinum	A large space in the thoracic cavity in the chest that contains vital structures such as the heart and its major blood vessels, as well as the esophagus (food pipe), trachea (wind pipe) etc.
Melatonin	Often referred to as the sleep hormone, melatonin is secreted naturally by the body when it is dark and it regulates our night and day or sleep-wake cycles
Mental	Relating to the mind/the lower activities of the Self (pertaining to the imagination – the desires/feelings, thoughts and expectations)

Word	Meaning
Metabolic Syndrome	Refers to a cluster of conditions occurring together - high blood pressure, high blood sugar, excess body fat around the waist and abnormal cholesterol levels. All of these are often linked to poor lifestyle.
Metabolism	Body processes that convert the food and drink taken in, into energy and growth
Methi	Fenugreek
Micturition	Another term for urination (the act of passing urine).
Migraine	A type of recurring headache that may be triggered by various factors (e.g., stress, acidity, dehydration etc.), may be of varying intensity and often associated with symptoms of nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to light or sound etc.
Mono Sodium Glutamate (MSG)	A chemical that is sometimes added to restaurant food, canned foods etc. to enhance their taste.
MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging)	A diagnostic imaging test like the CT scan but, unlike CT, using radio waves and strong magnetic fields to produce images
Mutual	Togetherness, being with each other.
Mutual Fulfilment	Being in a relationship in which one unit is fulfilling the need of the other unit and vice-versa.
Natural Acceptance	Innate feeling of acceptance. It is for relationship, harmony and co-existence.
Natural Characteristic	The natural participation of a unit in the larger order.
Nature	Collection of units (material and consciousness units).
Naturopathy	An evidence-based system of medicine that is rational and uses no medication - only natural substances. It relies on the fact that the body has the capacity to heal itself, provided it is given the conducive support of the right intake and a healthy routine in synchronisation with nature.
Nausea	The sensation of uneasiness one has before throwing up (vomiting)
Nervous system	The brain, spinal cord, and nerves together make up the nervous system of the body which is used by the Self to send instructions to various specific parts of the body.
Non-communicable Diseases	Diseases that are usually long-term and do not spread from one person to another e.g., lifestyle diseases like diabetes, heart disease etc.
Palpitation	Becoming aware of an uncomfortable sensation of the heart pounding (beating either with a lot of force or too rapidly) - an example of disharmony in the body
Pandemic	A rapid spread of an infectious disease across a large region, for instance multiple continents or worldwide, affecting a substantial number of individuals within a short period of time.

Word	Meaning
Paranasal Sinuses	Small hollow air-filled spaces in the bones around the nose that are lined with mucous forming cells. These sinuses drain into the nose and the mucous secreted by them keeps the nose moist, preventing it from drying out.
Paranoia	An extreme and unreasonable feeling that other people do not like you or are going to harm or criticise you
Paratha	A rolled form of flatbread that has many layers, is often stuffed with a filling and shallow fried on a flat skillet
Paratyphoid	An infectious disease similar to Typhoid - only may be less severe. It is caused by a slightly different variant of the same bacterium that causes Typhoid.
Participation	Behaviour, work or other involvement with another unit.
Peristalsis	A series of symmetric contractions and relaxations in the muscles of the walls of the digestive tract that help to push food, fluid and waste down through the digestive tract of the body
Petha	Ash gourd
Postpartum Period	The first six weeks after giving birth to a baby are referred to as the post-partum period. By the completion of six weeks, the mother's body has nearly returned to its pre-pregnant state.
Preconditioning	An assumption that has not been self-verified. It may or may not be a right assumption.
Profession	Participation in the larger order, in the system of production, health, exchange, etc. To profess what one knows and practices – in human consciousness with the right understanding.
Professional Ethics	The basic codes/principles in the expression (behaviour, work and participation in the larger order) of definite human conduct, specifically in relation to the profession being carried out.
Prosperity	The feeling of having/producing more than required physical facility.
Puri	Rolled form of puffed up bread that is deep fried in oil
Purpose	The natural characteristic of the unit.
Rasgulla	A syrupy dessert comprising soft, spongy balls made of paneer (cottage cheese) immersed in sugar syrup
Reactive Airway Disease (RAD)	A general term for respiratory illness in children, with asthma like symptoms (e.g., wheezing).
Realisation	Seeing the essence of entire reality directly. Seeing existence as co-existence in the Self.
Reality	Whatever exists. There are three kinds of reality - material, consciousness and space.
Recognising	Being able to see the relationship.

Word	Meaning
Regeneration	A natural process of replacing or restoring damaged or missing cells, tissues, organs etc. in the body as a part of the body's normal self-organisation.
Right Feeling	Feeling of co-existence, harmony and relationship. Feeling of love (complete value)... feeling of trust (foundation value). [all 9 values]
Right Understanding	Understanding of harmony at four levels of living from Self to entire existence. Endowed with knowledge.
Right Utilisation	(1) The utilisation of a physical facility in fulfilling the comprehensive human goal. (2) Activities of extending and offering one's wealth (body, Self, and physical resources) in fulfilling human values.
Roti	Plain rolled dry flatbread, most often made with wheat flour
Samosa	A triangular shaped deep fried snack made of white flour folded in a triangular shape and usually filled with potato and spices
Sanskar	Acceptances derived out of the accumulation (in the Self) of desire, thought and expectation over all time.
Saunf	Fennel seeds
Saunth/Sunthi	Dry Ginger powder
Sciatic Nerves	The largest nerves in the body, originating in the lower back and traveling posteriorly down through both lower limbs (as the left and right sciatic nerves) all the way down to the heels of the feet. Pain along the path of the nerve is referred to as 'sciatica'. An effective remedy for this pain is yoga and stretching exercises.
Self	Unit of consciousness.
Self-exploration	Exploring within the Self.
Self-extension	Extending the harmony within to the outside world.
Self-Organisation	The internal organisation or order of a unit.
Self-Organised	In accordance with its innateness, in harmony, in a definite order, participating in the larger order in accordance with its natural characteristic.
Self-regulation	(1) In the context of the Body - the feeling of responsibility for nurturing, protection and right utilisation of the Body. (2) In the context of nature - the regulation within the four orders.
Self-verification	Verification by the Self, in the Self on the basis of its natural acceptance as well as experiential validation for relationship, harmony and co-existence.
Sendha namak	Rock Salt
Sensation	Sensation is the information the Self reads from the Body through the five sense organs - of sound, touch, sight, taste and smell.
Skills	Learning of process (way or techniques) to work with the rest of nature and to express feelings through behaviour.

Word	Meaning
Society	Group of families living together in a relationship of mutual fulfilment.
Sooji	'Semolina'; sometimes referred to as 'cream of wheat'- a highly processed form of wheat – more processed than aata and less than maida.
Space	The all-pervading reality in which every material and conscious unit is submerged – energy in equilibrium, all reflecting.
Spirit	Pertaining to the Self/Consciousness unit
Stress	Conflict, contradiction or disharmony within the Self – a result of the imagination (feelings, thoughts and expectations) not being in line with the natural acceptance (the pure Self)
Stupor	A state of unresponsiveness and near unconsciousness from which a person can be aroused only by vigorous stimulation e.g., shaking
Sukhasana	A simple cross legged sitting posture (easy pose)
Teenage	13-19 years of age. Also referred to as an adolescent.
Toddler	A child between 1-3 years of age
Truth	Essence, that which is ever-present.
Tulsi	Holy Basil
Tumor	An abnormal growth or mass of cells that may be benign (non-cancerous/harmless) or malignant (cancerous).
Typhoid	A highly infectious bacterial disease that involves several organs of the body and can have grave consequences if left untreated. Being transmitted through water or food contaminated by faeces, it is a communicable disease.
Ulcer	A break in the skin, or in the lining of an organ in the body that does not heal naturally.
Ulceration	The process of forming an ulcer or ulcers.
Undivided Society	A society in which every individual has an acceptance of being related for every other individual.
Unhappiness	To be forced to be in a state of disharmony.
Universal Human Order	A society in which human goal is fulfilled generation after generation.
Vajrasana	Thunderbolt or Diamond Posture – Involves kneeling and sitting back on the heels of the feet, taking the weight off the knees.
Values	The natural participation of a unit in the larger order.
Wheezing	A high-pitched, musical, whistling type of sound produced by airflow through an abnormally narrowed or compressed airway(s).
Wisdom	Clarity of human goal.
Work	The effort a human being does on the rest of nature by which physical facility is produced.

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